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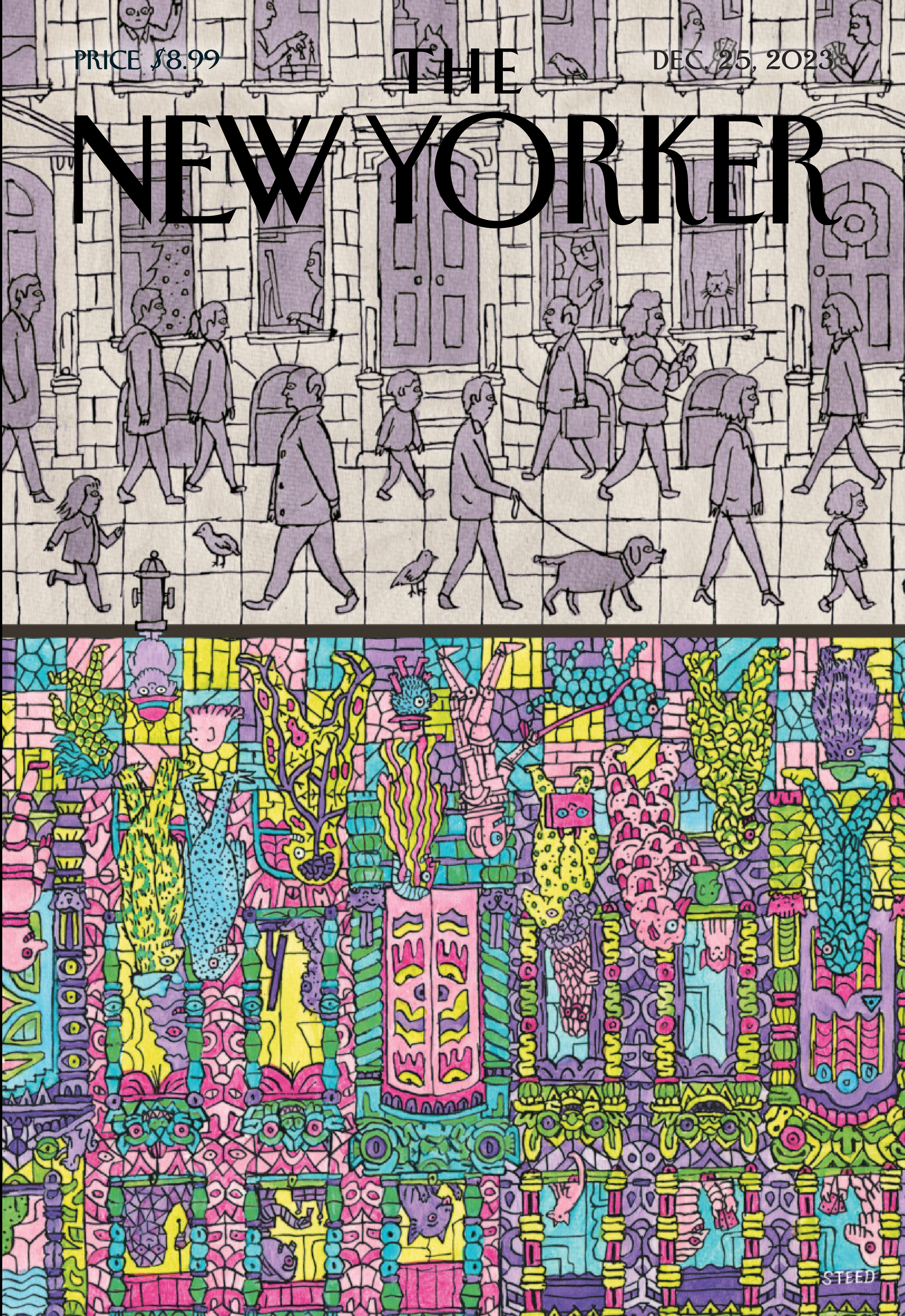
DEC. 25, 2023



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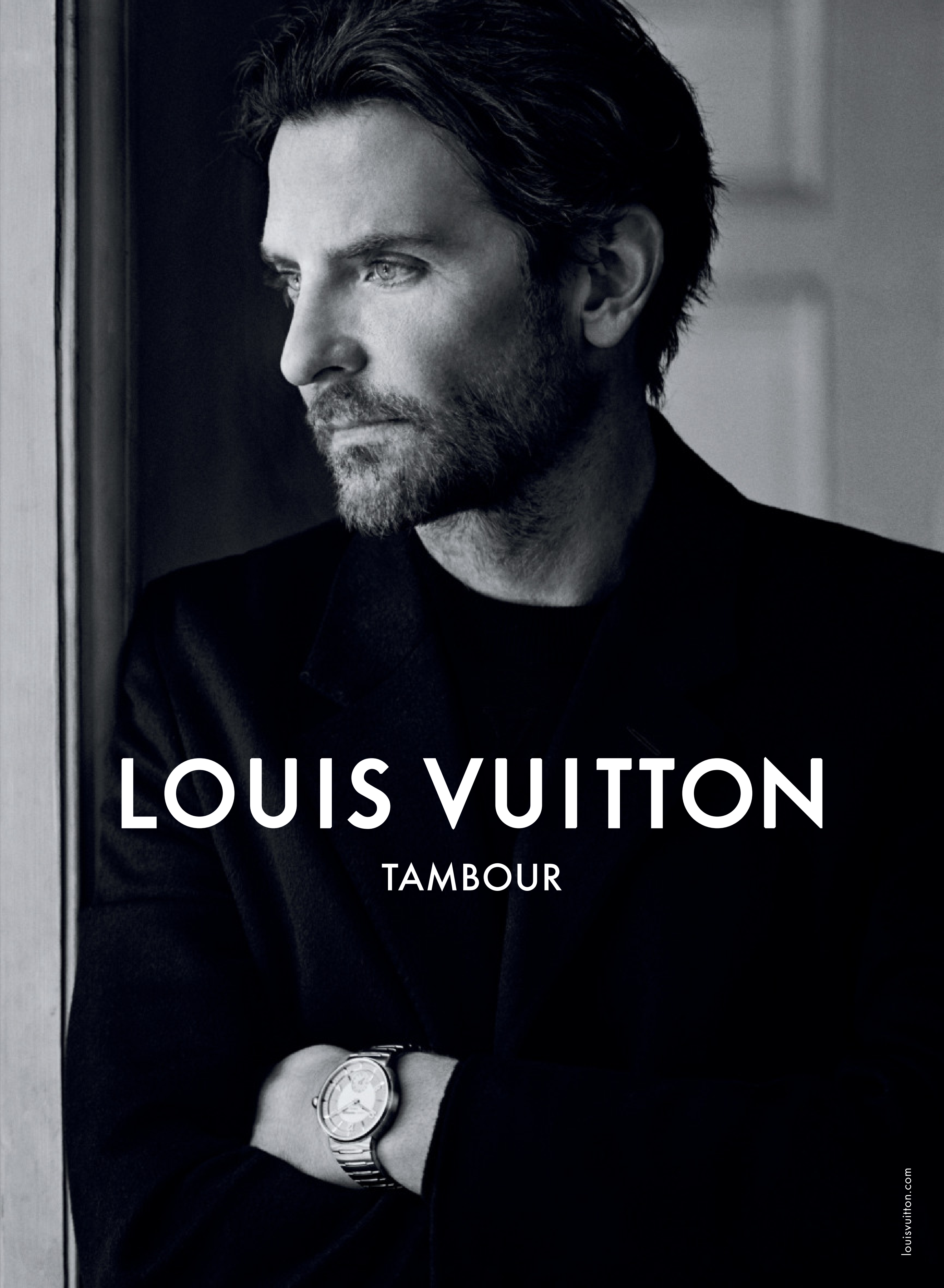
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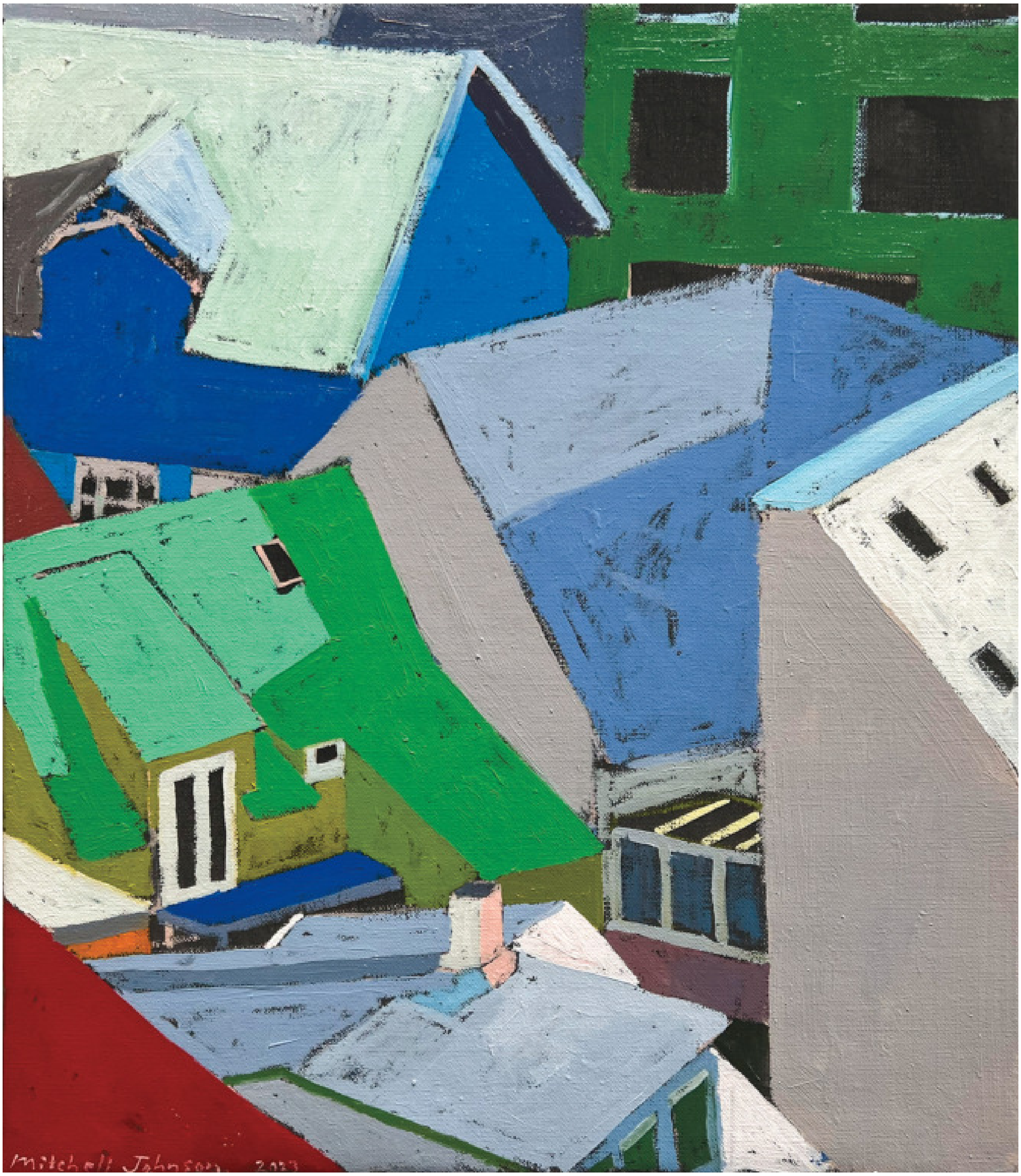

Reykjavik (Domino Sugar), 2023, 21 x 18 inches, oil on canvas. © 2023 Mitchell Johnson.

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ILLUSTRATION BY CARI VANDER YACHT

THE MAIL

MAKING THE CUT

Joshua Rothman, in his Profile of me, incorrectly described my tree-felling process (“Metamorphosis,” November 20th). The diameter of the tree in question—a twenty-foot cedar—was greater than the length of my wimpy fourteen-inch chainsaw, so the back-and-forth technique that he observed was first to cut a V on the lower side of the tree, the side of its lean, and then to make a cut on the higher side; not, as was previously written and as a letter writer noted, to make a first cut opposite the tree’s lean (The Mail, December 11th). Canadians know how to fell trees.

Geoffrey Hinton
Toronto, Ont.

THE THIRD SINGER

Adam Kirsch attributes Isaac Bashevis Singer’s literary fame at least in part to Bashevis’s outliving his brother I. J. Singer (Books, December 4th). But the roots of Bashevis fever can be traced back to prewar Poland, before Bashevis had even published his first novel. Bashevis’s nephew Maurice Carr, in his memoir, recounts a family reunion at a writers’ retreat in 1926, when the literati were already swirling around Bashevis. It was the future novelist Esther Singer Kreitman who was most overlooked, not least by her brothers, who ignored her to the point of cruelty. The three siblings’ story reminds us that artistic potential is usually a self-fulfilling prophecy, expected from those who already look the part.

Max Weinreich
Somerville, Mass.

TRAGIC OUTCOMES

Jennifer Gonnerman’s excellent article about the consequences of a school shooting depicts the tragedies that sometimes occur because of mental illness (“The Aftermath,” December 4th). Around one in a hundred Americans has schizophrenia; as a licensed social worker, I find it a travesty of justice that Kip Kinkel was found guilty instead of not guilty by reason of insanity, and respect the wisdom of Kip’s sister, Kristin, who has recognized Kip’s illness and has loved her brother unconditionally for all these years.

In an enlightened society, Kip would have been confined to a mental hospital until he could be released under the care of state mental-health professionals and monitored for medication compliance. Certainly, there are many victims here—Kip’s parents and the two students who died, the students who were shot and seriously injured, the many survivors—and among them is Kip himself.

Roger Goldblatt
Kansas City, Mo.

ENTER GHOST

Rebecca Mead, in her piece on the German actor Sandra Hüller, describes Hüller’s performance in a 2019 production of “Hamlet” (“Interiors,” December 4th). During Hamlet’s encounter with the ghost of his father, Hüller spoke both characters’ lines, with the ghost’s exhortation to revenge seemingly torn from Hamlet’s innards. I was reminded of another production, at the Royal Court, in London, in 1980, directed by Richard Eyre and starring a young Jonathan Pryce: the encounter with the ghost was performed the same way, with Pryce fairly vomiting his father’s words, a bodily possession both painful and purging. It still resonates with me as one of the most exciting and terrifying stage moments I’ve witnessed.

Chris Rohmann
Florence, Mass.

•

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GOINGS ON

DECEMBER 20 – 26, 2023

What we're watching, listening to, and doing this week.

In the nineteen-tens, Charlie Chaplin revolutionized movies with his character the Tramp. His film **"A Woman of Paris,"** from 1923, wrought a second revolution, albeit under the radar (not least because the Tramp took no part in it). This silent movie (in a new restoration, opening Dec. 22, at Film Forum), which Chaplin wrote and directed, is a romantic melodrama of understated, whispery intimacy. After a young woman (Edna Purviance) from a small French town is separated from her artist fiancé (Carl Miller), by their parents and by circumstances, she ends up in the capital, where she becomes the luxuriously supported lover of a wealthy roué (Adolphe Menjou). The movie, which quietly rages against the narrow-minded moralism that drives the young lovers apart, proved—mainly to other directors—that film could sustain a nearly novelistic subtlety.—*Richard Brody*

COURTESY JANUS FILMS

ABOUT TOWN

PODCASTS | The fourth season of **"The Paris Review Podcast"** brings a special aural magic—twinkling piano, pensive cello, the occasional far-off car horn—to its immersive offerings of recent and archival fiction, poetry, and interviews; like so much transporting art, each episode feels both grounded and celestial. So far, it has featured fiction by Rivers Solomon, read by Lena Waithe; a conversation with Sharon Olds (who describes a recurring dream, on nights before a reading, about being "late for my execution"); and poems by Rilke, Toi Derricotte, and Maggie Millner, stealthily read by Millner inside a coffin-like closet at IKEA. The podcast's beauty comes from its masterly production and sound design, by some of the form's best practitioners, including John DeLore and Helena de Groot.—*Sarah Larson*

OFF BROADWAY | Samuel Beckett's **"Waiting for Godot,"** which premièred in 1953, is often set aside as an example of onstage philosophizing, all cerebral existentialism, with none of the comforts of conventional plot. But in the hands of the director Arin Arbus, along with Michael Shannon and Paul Sparks, who play Estragon and Vladimir like a comedy team, "Godot" becomes what it has always been: a thrilling, melancholy, comic slice of life on earth. This Theatre for a New Audience production is above all about friendship, about how the pyrotechnics of living together—argument and consolation, recrimination and love—are a stay against an often comfortless world.—*Vinson Cunningham (Reviewed in our issue of 11/27/23.) (Polonsky Shakespeare Center; through Dec. 23.)*

HIP-HOP | The Queens-born rapper **Lil Tecca** emerged during a boom of crooning teen-aged rappers, in 2019, with the explosive release of "Ransom," a twinkling bauble born of a tweet exchange with a producer from the record label and collective Internet Money, known for working with stars of a then cresting wave of SoundCloud rap. Despite the blasé appeal of his spiralling singsong melodies, Tecca has joked that his early raps were a bluff, a hint at an identity yet to form. But faking it until you make it can be a viable strategy for a young artist on the cusp of a breakthrough, and, after two albums of breezy, Auto-Tuned navel-gazing, Tecca finally becomes a singular star on the personality-driven and dynamic "TEC."—*Sheldon Pearce (The Paramount; Dec. 22.)*

ART | For **"Artist's Choice: Grace Wales Bonner—Spirit Movers,"** the British fashion designer Wales Bonner organized thirty-seven objects from MOMA's collection in a witty, sophisticated installation with a symphonic sweep. Its centerpiece is Terry Adkins's soaring sculptural ensemble "Last Trumpet," which lines up four eighteen-foot-long brass horns, as if ready for a celestial choir. The show, described as a meditation on modern Black expression, also includes lithographs by Jean Dubuffet, sculpture by Jean Arp, and a fetish object by Lucas Samaras. Especially tactile and tantalizing are Lenore Tawney's circle of tiny seeds on open book pages, and a scroll by David Hammons, torn to reveal a lattice of wire mesh stuffed with tufts of hair from Black barbershops.—*Vince Aletti (MOMA; through April 7.)*

DANCE | The final two weeks of **Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre's** winter season offer a few more chances to catch this year's big première, "CENTURY," by the in-demand Amy Hall Garner. Conceived as a birthday gift to her grandfather, who is turning a hundred, the work is a good-time romp set to his kind of music—Count Basie, Ray Charles, Louisiana second line. Other programs feature the return of Alonzo King's "Following the Subtle Current Upstream," as well as recent pieces by Kyle Abraham and Jamar Roberts, along with plenty of Ailey classics.—*Brian Seibert (New York City Center; through Dec. 31.)*

MOVIES | Sean Durkin, who wrote and directed **"The Iron Claw,"** a bio-pic about the professional wrestlers of the Von Erich family, approaches the story with a critical and fervent curiosity. The film is set mainly in the nineteen-eighties, in Texas, at the family compound, which is run rigidly by its patriarch, Fritz (Holt McCallany). Despite his successes, Fritz considers himself persecuted by the wrestling establishment and uses his sons for revenge, grooming them to become world champions and pitting them against one another for the opportunity. The story is centered on one son, Kevin (Zac Efron), a rising star whose relationship with a tough-minded woman (Lily James) helps him survive the torments that ruin his brothers. The physical pain of the sport pales beside the emotional agony resulting from a domestic reign of terror.—*Richard Brody (In theatrical release Dec. 22.)*

TABLES FOR TWO

UnTable

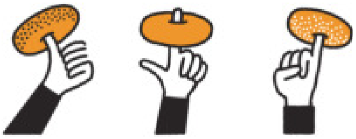
529 Henry St., Brooklyn

An exceptional Thai restaurant has slipped into a sleepy block of Carroll Gardens. UnTable, opened by the talented thirty-nine-year-old chef Aun Kampimarn, in September, in a charming tin-ceilinged room, exudes cheerful, unpretentious vibes, while serving elegant, modern iterations of classic Thai combinations. The restaurant's earnest intention can be found both in its name—"Un," a variation of Aun, signals the chef's unconventional approach to Thai cuisine—and in a poem on Instagram by Meen Srisopa, a co-owner, that ties the cricket sounds of Kampimarn's childhood to a Chilean-sea-bass recipe that incorporates a tomato sauce reminiscent of his grandmother's.

Kampimarn—who grew up in Udon Thani, in northeast Thailand, and came to the U.S. thirteen years ago—once cooked at the highly praised Somtum Der, in Red Hook, but it was with the pre-service family meals that he auditioned his recipes; these became the basis for the menu at UnTable. The appetizer Yum Samgler, which evokes a jaunty fruit ceviche, is more poignant with a primer: *Yum* refers to cold salad, in this case a refreshing medley of cherry tomato, grapes, fig, strawberry, and avocado, and *Samgler* alludes to a group of three friends which wouldn't be the same without any one member, nodding here to the cilantro, garlic, and black pepper in the bright lime dressing—and also, as Srisopa told me, to the restaurant's three original partners. A shrimp appetizer wouldn't normally quicken the pulse, but for Goong Lui Saun four poached tiger shrimp, shell-on, are doused in a zippy lime-and-fish-sauce dressing that highlights thick coins of fresh lemongrass, large chunks of raw garlic and ginger, Thai chili, whole fried cashews, triangles of lime, peel included, and micro-cilantro. It's hot, sweet, bitter, and, with all that raw garlic, a thrilling shock.

Seared scallops and enoki mushrooms grace a gorgeously creamy Tom Kha chowder, a December special, derived from a paste of galangal, lime leaves, and lemongrass slow-cooked with coconut milk. Crab croquettes, under a wig of frizzled lemongrass and lime leaf, are a lovely prelude to that Chilean sea bass, E-San Style, lavish with moons of kabocha squash. For the spice-curious, the must-order dish is the WHAT THE HELL!! fried rice, labelled, on the menu, with twelve chili peppers. Upon its arrival to my table, not one but two gracious servers instructed us to first try the rice mounded in the center, already laden with some very spicy Thai chilies, before mixing in *more* chilies, along with bits of rolled egg, fried onion, sweet sautéed pork, mango, and green beans. Without the extra chili, it was more of a What the Heck experience; crank up the heat at your own risk. The sole dessert, a vivacious yuzu-basil sorbet, is a fitting précis of Kampimarn's food—bracing and comforting at once. *(Dishes $14-$38.)*

—*Shauna Lyon*



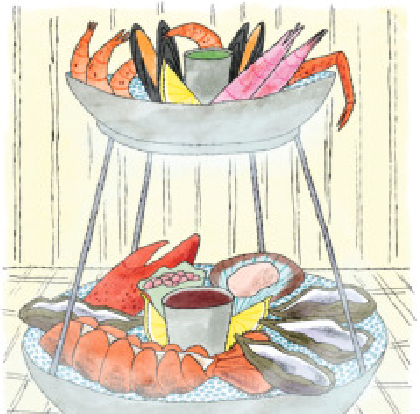
PICK THREE

Helen Rosner on three perfect seafood towers.

1. SUVANNAMACCHA'S OFFERING, AT THAI DINER: Nolita's faultless Thai Diner offers a sumptuous orchid-garnished plateau, named for a golden mermaid-princess from the Ramayana. The riotous double-decker tower bears a scallop crudo with lemongrass, octopus in a red-bean-curd dressing, and a tart green-mango salad. A trio of condiments, including a brilliant tom-yum cocktail sauce, can be applied to tender oysters, tremendous meaty mussels, and a kingly portion of crab claws.

2. THE LOWBROW, AT GRAND ARMY BAR: The jewel of the seafood-focussed menu at this chill Boerum Hill cocktail bar is the Lowbrow Tower, an almost confrontationally minimalist, zero-drama shellfish plateau. No fuss, no glitz, just a tidy arrangement of oysters, littlenecks, four neatly curled shrimp—and, brilliantly, a clutch of devilled eggs piped high with yolk, which has been blended with soy and sesame, and dolloped with salty trout roe. It's one of my favorite dinner-for-one choices in the city, best consumed seated at the bar, with a cocktail.

3. THE SEAFOOD PLATEAU, AT DELMONICO'S: One of New York's oldest restaurants—recently revived, in the financial district—understands spectacle. The Seafood Plateau arrives in a theatrical swirl of dry ice, white mist cascading from its two tiers. The presentation comprises oysters with passion-fruit mignonette and the day's crudo—yellowtail with avocado, say, or scallops in yuzu—and chilled lobsters, their silken claws already flawlessly denuded. Standing out amid all the pageantry are quite simply the most enormous cocktail shrimp I've ever seen.



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—FINANCIAL TIMES
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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

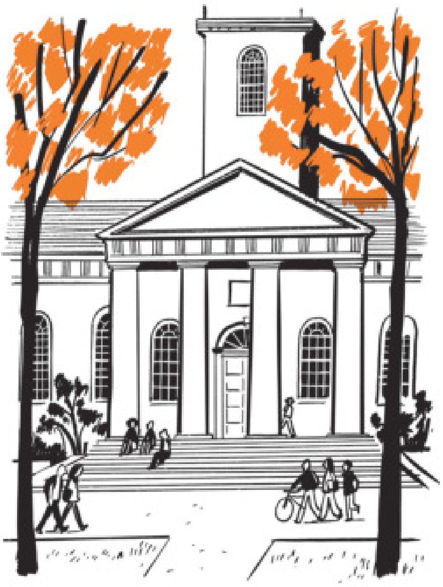
COMMENT
SPEAKING FREELY

On a wet afternoon in late September, Claudine Gay, the first Black president of Harvard University, delivered her inaugural address. Gay, who had previously been the dean of Harvard’s Faculty of Arts and Sciences, said that knowledge is best served “when we commit to open inquiry and freedom of expression as foundational values of our academic community,” adding that a diversity “of backgrounds, lived experiences, and perspectives” enables “the learning that happens when ideas and opinions collide.”

The past several years, of course, have seen an erosion of academic freedom. From book bans to the notion that offensive ideas make one unsafe, both the right and the left have participated in curtailing open inquiry. As dean, Gay built a reputation for prizing the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion, which are often perceived as intolerant of viewpoints—say, that marriage is limited to a man and a woman, or affirmative action is discriminatory, or there are only two biological sexes—that may offend marginalized groups. At her inauguration, she warned that diverse viewpoints “can be a recipe for discomfort, fired in the heat of social media and partisan rancor,” and that this can “make us vulnerable to a rhetoric of control and containment that has no place in the academy.”

A week later came the attack of October 7th. The shocking severity of Hamas’s slaughter, rape, and kidnapping of Israelis had not yet sunk in, but that same day thirty-four Harvard student organizations issued a statement holding “the Israeli regime entirely responsible for all unfolding violence,” because of its previous actions in Gaza. The backlash was swift. Some called for disciplinary measures. The hedge-fund C.E.O. Bill Ackman, a Harvard alumnus, demanded that the names of the organizations’ members be released, so that potential employers could avoid hiring them. A truck in Harvard Square displayed students’ faces with the caption “Harvard’s leading antisemites.” Denunciations came from lawmakers, including the Republican congresswoman Elise Stefanik, of New York, an ardent Trump supporter and a Harvard alumna.

On October 9th, Gay and the university’s deans issued a statement emphasizing “our common humanity” and “goodwill in a time of unimaginable loss and sorrow,” but did not explicitly condemn Hamas or rebuke the student groups. Gay’s successive pronouncements condemning the terror attack and denouncing antisemitism and introducing an advisory group to address it created an unfortunate appearance of her being pushed to say whatever might quell the public-relations storm. When she defended free speech in response to calls to curb anti-Israel or antisemitic statements, critics cried hypocrisy, noting that Harvard intervenes in incidents of alleged racist and sexist speech, under the rubric of harassment and discrimination policies—though not to the punitive degree the critics were demanding.



If Gay hoped to implement the free-expression vision of her inaugural address, the furor was derailing it. Many academic-freedom proponents yearned for the University of Chicago’s Kalven principles, which require university leaders not to issue statements on social and political matters, so that the university can be a neutral forum for diverse viewpoints, political protest, and candid discussion. But in November, amid pressure to punish protesters chanting “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free,” Gay declared, “I condemn this phrase.” To some, including Hamas, the slogan advocates eliminating Israel or the Jewish presence in the Middle East, but to others it advocates freedom and equality for Palestinians.

During the December 5th congressional hearing on campus antisemitism, Representative Stefanik insisted that such slogans are genocidal. As she and other Republican lawmakers grilled three university presidents—Gay; Liz Magill, of the University of Pennsylvania; and Sally Kornbluth, of M.I.T.—she asked, “Does calling for the genocide of Jews violate Harvard’s rules on bullying and

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOÃO FAZENDA

harassment?" Gay said that it can, "depending on the context." Kornbluth and Magill offered similar responses. Stefanik declared them "unacceptable."

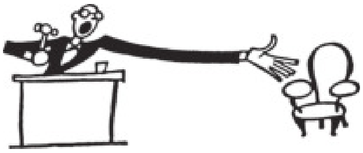
The claim that the answer depends on context is correct; any responsible determination of a policy violation is context-dependent. In the context of October 7th, it would have been clearer to say something like "Yes, calling for a person to be killed because they are Jewish or Palestinian would constitute bullying and harassment. And, if the phrase 'from the river to sea' was used specifically to threaten to kill someone, that would at a minimum violate the rules." It is unlikely, however, that any correct answer would have been acceptable. The presidents walked into an ambush, having prepared for a deposition (where counsel advises minimalist answers) rather than for political grandstanding. And the moment plainly needed a moral statement rather than a legally precise reply.

More than seventy congresspeople demanded that all three presidents be fired. Magill was already vulnerable—donors had rescinded funds in response to Penn's hosting a Palestinian literary festival, in September, to which a speaker who had been accused of antisemitism (and denied it) was invited—and she resigned. Stefanik responded, "One down. Two to go." The fact that the presidents are women and that Gay is Black made them a target for attacking diversity and equating it with being unqualified. Ackman commented that "shrinking the pool of candidates based on required race, gender, and/or sexual orientation criteria is not the right approach to identifying the best leaders for our most prestigious universities." But, after seven hundred faculty members (I was among them) urged Harvard's governing board "to resist political pressures that are at odds with Harvard's commitment to academic freedom," the board unanimously supported Gay's continuing as president, writing, "We champion open discourse and academic freedom."

No one should be duped into applauding a McCarthyesque spectacle of members of Congress demanding firings by universities. Last year, Stefanik co-sponsored the Restoring Academic Freedom on Campus Act, claiming that some universities, in their devotion to "Far Left woke ideology," had failed in the task of "encouraging diversity of ideas." Some conservatives appear to think that the wave of moral panic they are riding will somehow bring about more freedom of expression. But inciting rage over not punishing antisemitic speech, or speech that they take to be antisemitic, will place pressure on universities to create or toughen codes to restrict even more speech. Here's hoping that universities will have the courage to level up on academic freedom rather than down.

—*Jeannie Suk Gersen*

THE BENCH
SPECTATOR SPORT



Most days, Donald Trump is not required to appear at the civil fraud trial for the suit brought against him by Letitia James, the New York attorney general. Yet there he sits, the former President—a permanent scowl on his face directed at the American judicial system—flanked by his lawyers, all of whom seem awestruck at the strange turn that their careers have taken. But if you squint and look just beyond the defendant, there is another regular figure in the gallery, a man with close-set eyes, wearing a dress shirt and smiling broadly. It is Allen Roskoff, the head of the Jim Owles Liberal Democratic Club, a small L.G.B.T.Q. political group based in the Village. Roskoff, always seated in the front row, is familiar to anyone who has aspired to high office in New York during the past half century. A civic gadfly, he is known as a tormentor of politicians whom he dislikes. (He organized an effort to find an opponent for Mayor Eric Adams soon after Adams was sworn in.) Politicians he does like get both the Jim Owles Club endorsement and regular invitations to attend Broadway shows as Roskoff's date. (Last month, he went to see "I Can Get It for You Wholesale" with twenty judges.)

Roskoff's social-media pages are full of shots of him with progressive allies—District Attorney Alvin Bragg, Chuck Schumer, Representative Ritchie Torres—often at the theatre just before the lights go down. Roskoff, who has been a gay activist in New York since Stonewall, has said he was the city's first openly gay political hire when he went to work for the comptroller, in 1974. He founded Jim Owles in 2004, naming the club after a friend who had died of AIDS. Following Colin Kaepernick's lead, Roskoff routinely kneels during the national anthem.

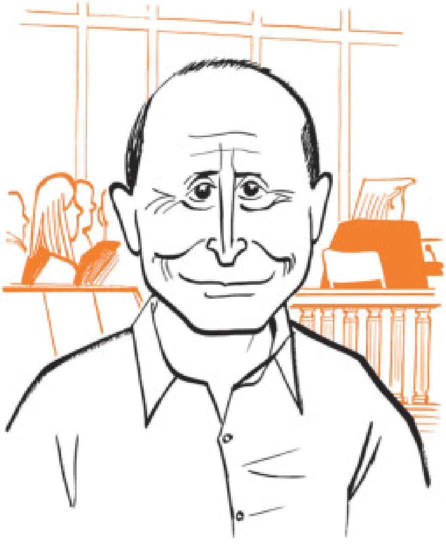
Trump has been a regular antagonist ever since 2011, when he was exploring a Presidential run and told reporters that he opposed not only gay marriage but also giving gay couples the same rights as straight married couples. Roskoff promptly labelled Trump "an extreme bigot" in the *Daily News* and called for a boycott of all Trump businesses.

Trump telephoned his adversary, and the two had a fiery back-and-forth. "Do you know what your gay employees think of you?" Roskoff asked him.

"They all respect me, because they know I treat everyone equally," Roskoff recalls Trump replying.

Roskoff refuted that, adding, "They all think you're a horrible person!"

Now, twelve years later, Roskoff gets to watch his old enemy in the hot seat from a few yards away. His spot in the



Allen Roskoff

gallery is courtesy of the trial's judge, Arthur Engoron. The two have known each other for years, and in 2015 Engoron showed up seeking the Jim Owles Club endorsement. "We only endorse people who share the values of the club," Roskoff said. "Things like civil rights, equality, economic justice."

Engoron has survived calls from the Trump camp, which considers him biased, to recuse himself. He has an allotment of court seats in the front rows to dole out, one of which he has given to Roskoff.

"A lot of the judges who come before our club—you endorse them, and then they just disappear," Roskoff said. "They can't come to fund-raisers, but they can come to private parties, and some of them you really bond with, and become friends." He went on, "And you just keep your fingers crossed and hope that they do the right thing from the bench."

In order to get the club's endorsement, Roskoff said, "you have to be left on everything." It's a deal-breaker if a local politician declines to back Roskoff's plan to remove former Mayor Ed Koch's name from the Fifty-ninth Street Bridge. "When judges run, they show up at every goddam Christmas party in New York City!" he said. "I could tell the stupidest joke in the world, and some of these judges would laugh at it."

Roskoff has never taken Engoron to the theatre, but the judge has attended the Jim Owles holiday party.

"I didn't seek out a friendship with him," Roskoff said. "I like his mannerisms. He has a great sense of humor."

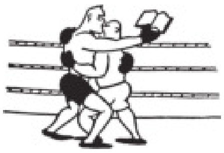
Roskoff has been impressed with the way that Engoron has presided in the Trump case. "He asks all the right questions," he said. He especially admires the fact that the judge hasn't let the Trump lawyers bait him into losing his temper.

It's a restraint that Roskoff himself lacks. "It was all I could do to not go up to Eric Trump and tell him he shouldn't wear those crazy socks all the time," he said. "He looks like a clown. You look at him, and you want to go wash your hands afterward."

As for the former President, he said, "It has been wonderful to watch him squirm." And even though in the course of the trial his friend the judge has withstood a number of vicious right-wing threats, being in the courtroom, Roskoff said, is "like living in history! Donald Trump on trial! In person! It's the chance of a lifetime."

—*David Freedlander*

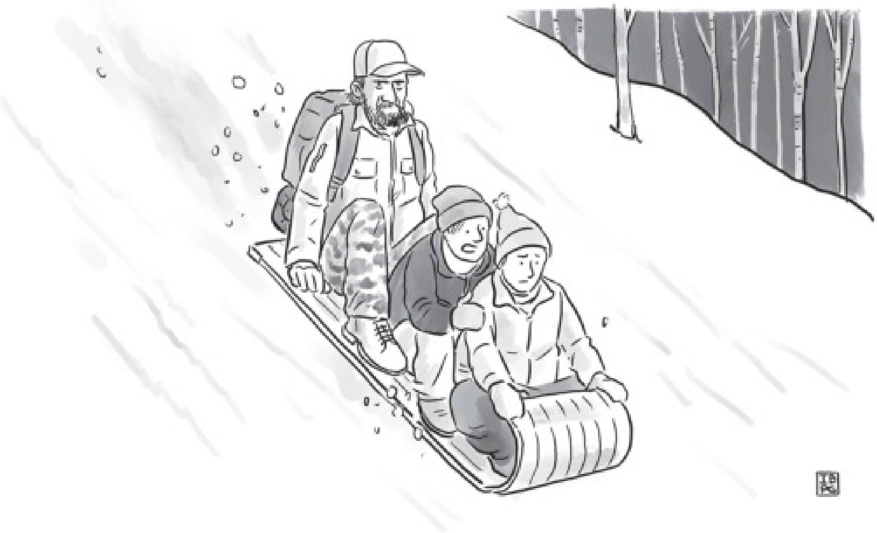
DEPT. OF DUDES
SOPHISTICATED MEATHEADS



Jon Finkel's calling as a book whisperer to burly bros can be traced to the summer of 2005. He was in his mid-twenties, living a version of the Southern California dream: surfing at dawn, writing for fitness magazines by day, and playing beach volleyball in the evening. The courts were in high demand, and he always arrived early and brought something to read. Finkel's apartment, a block from the water, was too small to accommodate his growing library, so he found himself pushing paperbacks on friends and family as a means of decluttering. His wasn't a literary crowd. But he found a "hundred-per-cent hit rate," as he recalled the other day, with a nonfiction book called "Shadow Divers," by Robert Kurson, about a pair of explorers who discover a sunken German U-boat off the coast of New Jersey. One acquaintance after another devoured the book. Then Finkel got a call from his friend Frank, who had been in a fraternity at Penn State with Finkel's younger brother Craig. "Dude, somebody just recommended 'Shadow Divers' to me, and it's the fucking copy you gave me six years ago!" Frank said. The dog-ears were unmistakable.

Finkel is now an author in his own right, whose books include "Jocks in Chief," which ranks the American Presidents in order of athleticism (Gerald Ford first, Andrew Johnson last), and a forthcoming biography of the wrestler Macho Man. He also issues weekly reading recommendations for "sophisticated meatheads," as he calls them, through his newsletter, "Books & Biceps." (Robert Kurson is a subscriber.) He lives in Palm Beach County, Florida, with his wife and two kids, and he benches as much as he did two decades ago: three hundred and fifteen pounds. A wall of his garage gym, known to Finkel followers as the Flex Factory, features posters of Rocky Balboa, Larry Bird, and the Boz, plus a touch of sophistication via Teddy Roosevelt, in black-and-white. "I love the 'Man in the Arena' speech," he explained, while giving a tour. "Don't read it every week, but every now and then I'll be sweating, stop, and—it kind of fires you up a little bit."

Think of Finkel as a gym rat's Reese Witherspoon. "At the end of the day, I'm just one dude out here getting other dudes to read again one book at a time," he tweeted recently. Occasionally, this can feel like swimming with an anchored harness (he's done it). "The publishing world in general is not very meatheady," he said. "The overlap of



"*Yeah, it's fun, but I still wish we hadn't picked up that hitchhiker.*"

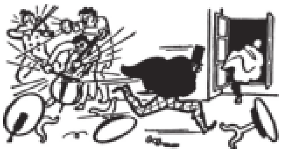
dudes who lift and also read a ton is, like, the most underserved market." Contra-stereotype, Finkel estimates that only ten per cent of meatheads are numbskulls. "It takes a pretty good amount of education to get your body how you want it," he said. He mentioned the kind of savvy feedback that he finds most gratifying, like when a reader praises him for recommending "the lesser-known Churchill bio." Beware the biography-laden diet, though, which is the bibliophile's equivalent of skipping leg day. "I openly talk about balancing out," Finkel said. For each Chernow, try an Updike. Offset the military history with narratives of personal survival. "Candice Millard—every book is incredible."

Two sophisticates in athletic shorts soon joined Finkel at the Flex Factory for a workout that he called Clubber Lang's Four Rounds of Pain, inspired by Mr. T's character in "Rocky III." They were his brother Craig and his old friend Kynon Codrington, who had arrived with a copy of "The Quarterback Whisperer," a Finkel rec, in his car. Codrington confessed that he'd been nursing it. Craig sympathized. "I don't read 'em as fast as Jon over here claims to," he said. "But I'd say all the books I've read in the past several years are something that Jon recommended. He does the legwork, so why waste your time?" Among the books currently on Craig's nightstand are "The Last Folk Hero," a biography of Bo Jackson; and the novel "Whalefall." He hadn't started that one yet, so Finkel provided a synopsis: "It's about a scuba diver who gets swallowed by a whale and has to puzzle-solve his way out through biology." It sounded good, but could it measure up to "Shadow Divers"? Craig was skeptical. "Every person's favorite book, ever, is 'Shadow Divers,'" he said.

They listened to nineties rap while cycling through the workout routine. Hex-bar dead lifts, jump rope, land mines, crunches, band curls. Finkel was alone among the trio in draping a chain around his neck before grabbing the pullup bar. Maybe it was the sporadic book talk, or the indignities of middle age, but they were starting to flag after three rounds of pain. "I think the fourth round will put everybody on their ass," Finkel acknowledged. Codrington reëntered the garage after jogging to a stop sign and back. "Dying here," he said. "I played college football for one year, and this is a harder workout than that. But Jon's an inspiration to all the guys with the father figures and not the dad bods."

—*Ben McGrath*

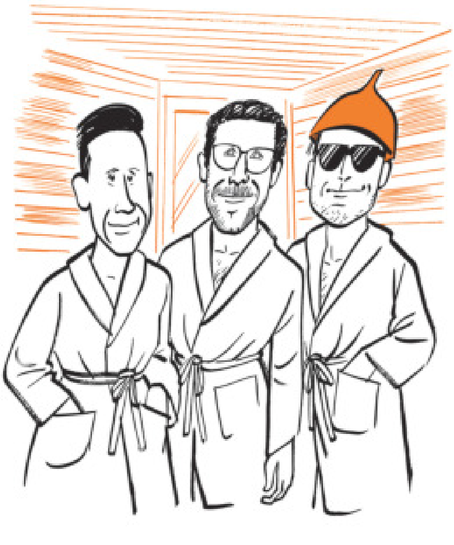
D.I.Y. DEPT.
EIGHT HERTZ



Last month, Vulfpeck, the *indie*-indie funk band that operates under its own label—it books the gigs, does the publicity, sells the tickets—held a residency in Brooklyn, eight peppery shows at the Avant Gardener, jammed into four days. "I was mentally prepared for burnout to the degree that this could make or break the band," Joe Dart, the bassist, said, when it was over.

Instead: success. Everyone felt rejuvenated, at least spiritually. Still, necks hurt, throats tickled, even well-calloused fingers had blisters. ("A lot of sixteenth notes," Dart said.) Monday, the band members who hadn't dispersed slept. Tuesday, they schvitzed. Dart, the enthusiastic one, was waiting at the Russian and Turkish Baths, on East Tenth Street—the place with the feuding co-owners. (It was Boris's day.) Dart sat with his bass in a travel case.

Cory Wong, the peppy one, showed up next, with his Fender. He wore a blue-and-green fuzzy sweater and an orange beanie. Jack Stratton, the deliberate one (and the front man, keyboardist, drummer, and guitarist), came afterward. "Yesterday, I was dragging," he said.



Cory Wong, Jack Stratton, Joe Dart

"This is the first day I'm awake," Dart said.

Wong and Dart took their instruments to the front desk and asked to check them. They were rehearsing later with the mandolin virtuoso Chris Thile. They found some storage space, but policy dictated that the front desk take collateral that could fit in a lockbox. Wong handed over a Costco executive-membership card. "I *know* I'm not leaving this," he said.

Nearby, Bobby Cannavale had materialized and was ordering food at the café counter. Into the locker room, out of the locker room. Stratton and Wong emerged displaying bathhouse-issued trunks, tasteful chest hair, and the lean build of working musicians. "I played hockey with the Kelce brothers when I was a kid," Stratton said. "I was actually relevant. And then they introduced checking. And I was not relevant." He was Jason Kelce's age. "He played the bari sax!"

"I played with David Backes, the captain of the St. Louis Blues," Wong, a Minnesotan, said. "He scored twelve goals in one game."

They headed for the Russian sauna: the hottest. Dart turned up wearing a banya hat—like a pointy fez that keeps your brain from boiling. "I have three!" he said. He'd been the inspiration for the title of their latest album, "Schvitz."

The band formed at the University of Michigan. Stratton, Dart, and Vulfpeck's drummer, Theo Katzman, were in the school of music, where Stratton stumbled on a textbook about the industry that became a blueprint for the band's approach to business, in inverse. "A lot of the advice was 'You're gonna lose a lot of money for the first twenty years,'" Stratton said. "Whoa. We're more mom-and-pop about it." They have found creative ways to make ends meet. Their first big idea was an album consisting of total silence. They asked fans to stream it on repeat while they slept. Each night's sleep yielded four dollars or so. It was half protest of Spotify's royalty structure, half stunt. They called it "Sleepify."

"It came to me on a vision quest in Northern California," Stratton said. "No substances, just holotropic breathing. Joe and Theo were highly skeptical." Spotify shut them down after seven weeks; monetizable songs, apparently, had to have sound. "People think we retired off that album," Stratton said. "It was twenty grand." They used the proceeds to put on a tour with free admission.

"A year or two later, Jack actually paid people to go to a show," Dart said.

Another Spotify album funded it. "I uploaded the resonant frequency of the Earth," Stratton said. "It's like eight hertz or something." Technically, sound. "But beyond the range of hearing."

"We stood at the exit after the show and handed each person a dollar," Dart said.

These days, their targets are promoters, Ticketmaster, and hidden fees of all kinds. They realized that the system was rigged when, in 2019, they sold out Madison Square Garden—one of the first manager-less bands ever to do so—and barely broke even. "We had post-M.S.G. clarity," Stratton said. For their residency, they set the price at a firm seventy-five bucks—no ticket-platform fees for the fans.

On to the cold plunge. Dart marched right in.

"Don't try to keep up with Joe," Stratton said.

"This is as cold as I've found it!" Dart said. He looked delighted. Stratton dipped a toe and turned around.

Resting between circuits, Wong bumped into a friend, a filmmaker named Jesse, who wore two stone necklaces. Everyone headed into the Finnish sauna. Sweat dripped. Heads felt floaty. "This is supposedly the room where J. Lo and Puff Daddy hung out," Jesse said.

"I knew I could feel something," Stratton said.

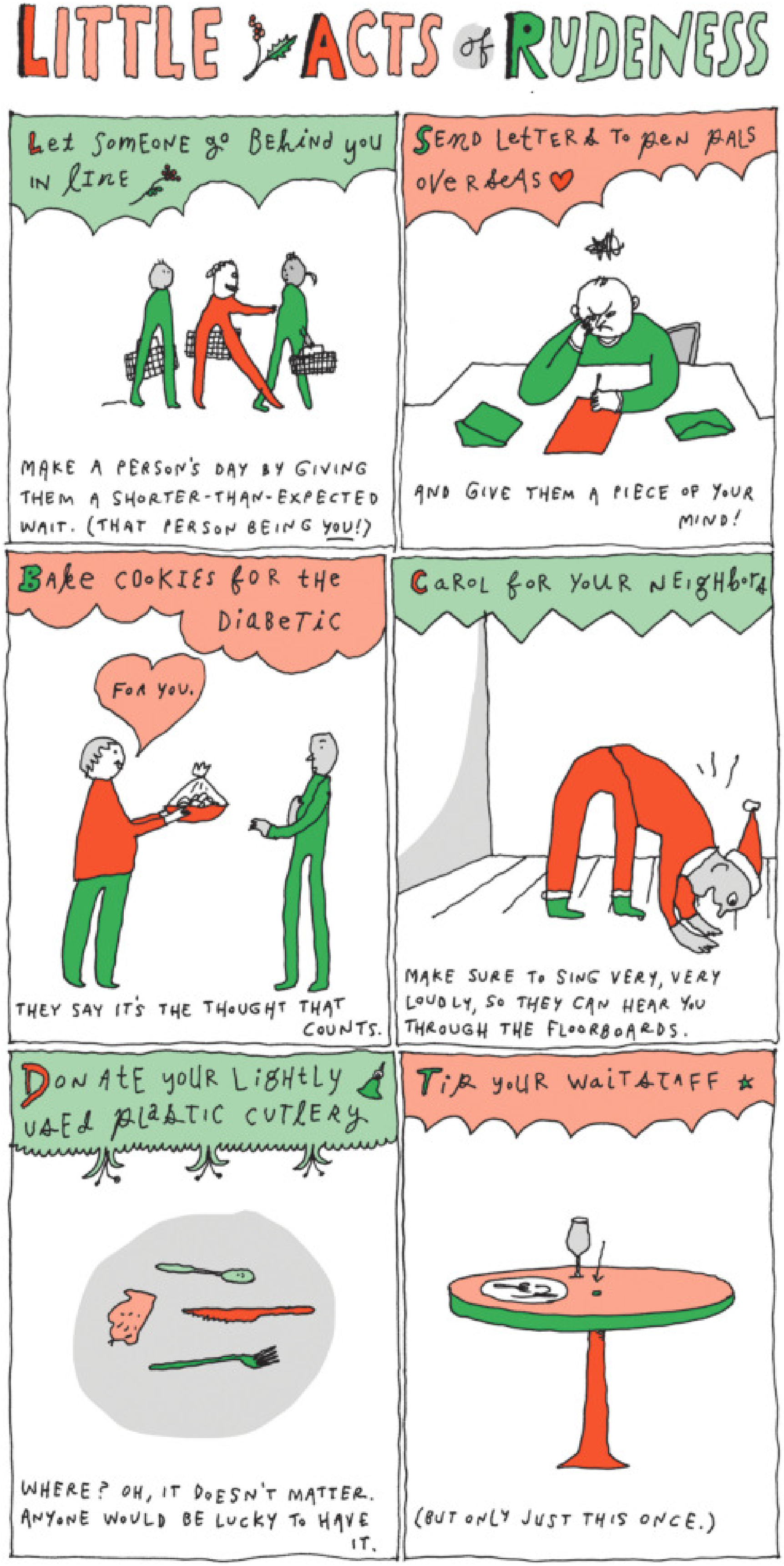
Romance happens to be the band's latest venture. "We married a couple onstage at Bonnaroo," Dart said. They'd auctioned the opportunity on eBay. "Luckily for us, Theo is an ordained minister." Stratton also has a klezmer band, which played the hora.

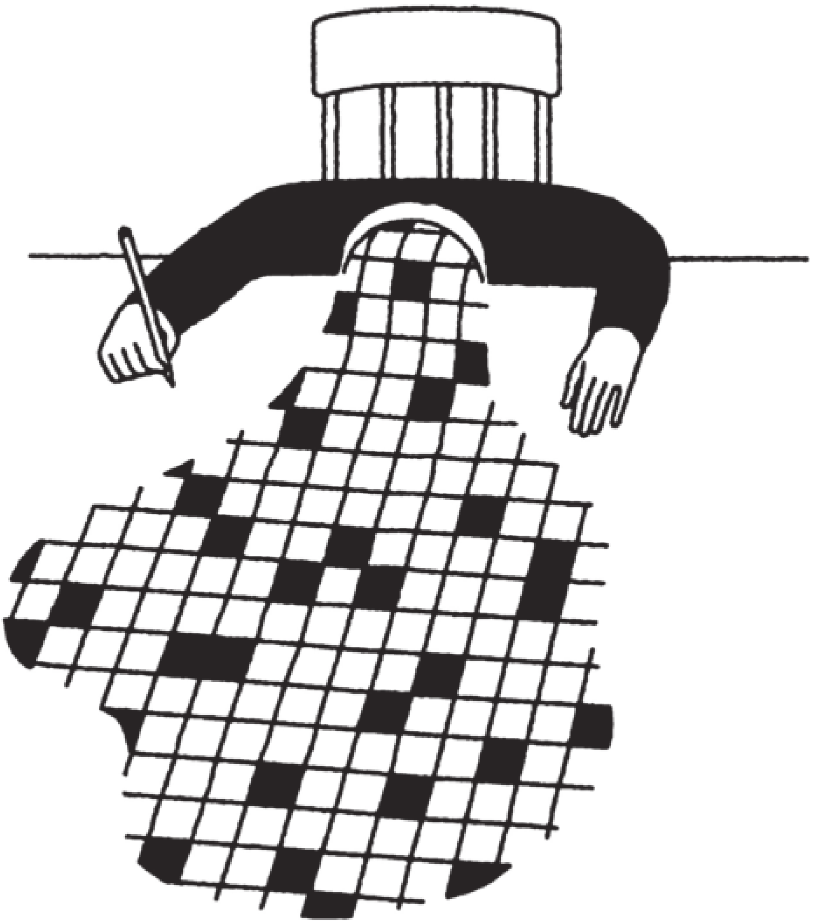
"I've seen them at a couple of shows since," Wong reported. "They're still together."

—*Zach Helfand*

SKETCHPAD BY LIANA FINCK

It's that time of year again! Cold, expensive, and senselessly hectic. That's why we compiled this list of ways you can contribute your own . . .


LITTLE ACTS of RUDENESS
Let someone go behind you in line
MAKE A PERSON'S DAY BY GIVING THEM A SHORTER-THAN-EXPECTED WAIT. (THAT PERSON BEING YOU!)
Send letters to pen pals overseas
AND GIVE THEM A PIECE OF YOUR MIND!
Bake cookies for the diabetic
FOR YOU.
THEY SAY IT'S THE THOUGHT THAT COUNTS.
Carol for your neighbors
MAKE SURE TO SING VERY, VERY LOUDLY, SO THEY CAN HEAR YOU THROUGH THE FLOORBOARDS.
Donate your lightly used plastic cutlery
WHERE? OH, IT DOESN'T MATTER. ANYONE WOULD BE LUCKY TO HAVE IT.
Tip your waitstaff
(BUT ONLY JUST THIS ONCE.)



ANNALS OF GAMING

REARRANGEMENTS

Crosswords, immigrants, and the American melting pot.

BY NATAN LAST

Root around in the alphanumeric soup of the U.S. visa system for long enough and you'll discover the EB-1A, sometimes known as the Einstein visa. Among the hardest permanent-resident visas to obtain, it is reserved for noncitizens with "extraordinary ability." John Lennon got a forerunner of it, in 1976, after a deportation scare that could have sent him back to Britain. (His case, which spotlighted prosecutorial discretion in immigration law, forms the legal basis for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, or DACA.) Modern-day recipients include the tennis star Monica Seles and—in a tasteless bit of irony—the Slovenian model Melania Knauss, in 2001, four years before she became Melania Trump. The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services requires applicants to fulfill three of ten criteria for extraordinariness or, alternatively, to provide evidence of a major "one-time achievement." "Pulitzer, Oscar, Olympic Medal" are the agency's helpful suggestions. Of a half million permanent-residency visas issued in the fiscal year 2022, only one per cent were EB-1As.

One went to Mangesh Ghogre, a forty-three-year-old man from Mumbai, whose extraordinary ability is writing crossword puzzles. I first met Ghogre in 2012, in Brooklyn, at the American Crossword Puzzle Tournament (A.C.P.T.), an annual speed-solving contest in which crossword writers like Ghogre and me take over a Marriott hotel, playing Boggle, trading puzzle ideas, punning compulsively. I entered the ballroom grumbling because high-school baseball practice had made me late; just then, Will Shortz, the editor of the New York *Times* puzzle and the tournament's organizer, was announcing that Ghogre was, by a few thousand miles, the person who'd travelled the farthest to be there.

Crossword creators are realizing that one solver's trivia is another's lived lexicon.

In early 2021, Ghogre came across a *Forbes* listicle titled "Seven Ways to Get Your Green Card in the United States." Most of the methods were familiar: "marry your way in" (the IR-1 or CR-1 visa), "invest your way in" (the EB-5, for those with a loose million dollars). But the EB-1A ("achieve your way in") was news to him. When I spoke to him last year, he told me the criteria seemed like a puzzle to which he was the perfect solution.

Q: Was there press on his accomplishments? A: Yes; as one of the lone creators of American crossword puzzles outside North America, he'd been profiled in the New York *Times* and the *Times of India*. Q: Had his work "been displayed at artistic exhibitions or showcases"? A: It had, at the 2014 Hindustan Times Kala Ghoda Arts Festival, where some of his grids had been colorized and dilated, every square the size of a fist. Q: Were his contributions of "major significance"? A: Ghogre had published a newsworthy tribute crossword in the New York *Times*, to mark the hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of Gandhi's birth. In it, the string GANDHI, put through the puzzle-maker's dissective wringer, is reinterpreted as "G AND H I"; the trigram GHI appears squeezed into a single box in phrases such as WEIGH IN, LONG HISTORY, and NOTTING HILL.

Ghogre told only his wife that he intended to apply for the visa. He dashed off a form e-mail to some twenty-five immigration lawyers, expecting silence. Instead, he received a handful of enthusiastic replies; one confident attorney offered a full refund of his fee if Ghogre was rejected. "Suddenly, my

ILLUSTRATION BY PABLO AMARGO

immigration puzzle was solved," he told me. "Today, when I look back, it looks like it was all destined to happen."

Ghogre's crossword and immigration stories began around the same time, twenty-six years ago, when he was an engineering student at Veermata Jijabai Technological Institute. Born into a middle-class family in Chandrapur in 1980 and raised in Mumbai, he grew up viewing business and STEM subjects as a ticket to global mobility. As soon as he entered university, he began, like many of his classmates, to study for the GMAT, the de-facto entrance exam for U.S. graduate programs in business, in the hope of landing a scholarship to a top M.B.A. program. For this, students would need to conquer the Verbal section, and many used crosswords as a way of broadening their English vocabulary. Ghogre lived with a dozen or so hostel-mates, most of whom spoke and wrote English as a second or third language, on a campus where the *Times of India*—with a crossword syndicated from the Los Angeles *Times*—was delivered daily. Each morning, a handful of students clustered around the puzzle, honing their English on a borrowed crossword, in a periodical with the largest daily English-language circulation in the world.

This was in 1997. Within a few years, the dot-com bubble had burst, and Ghogre shelved plans to become an international student, obtaining his M.B.A. in India instead. (Until recently, he worked in Mumbai as an I.P.O. banker, for the Japanese firm Nomura.) In the meantime, he was hooked on crosswords. He was thrown out of an engineering lecture for smuggling a puzzle into class, more enraptured by the black-and-white grid than by the matrix grids of linear algebra. His mother recalls him crosswording while waiting in queues, solving in pen while standing. Ghogre delighted in crossword themes that backlit the malleability of the English he was rapidly mastering: the wordplay reminded him of his fascination, in the eighth grade, with Sanskrit, whose morphology could be deconstructively shucked into root, affix, and ending. The dictionary he carried around (Random House Webster's) offered merely rote learning, whereas crosswords felt like engineering, a tactile means of putting his learning to use.

As Ghogre improved, he found that he could grok a puzzle's linguistic quirks, even if, some eight thousand miles from the United States, he didn't always understand their context. Crossword lovers, like joke lovers, have a quick-draw inventory of memorable puzzle themes; Ghogre describes a quip puzzle that featured the answers PIG-TIGHT, BULL-STRONG, and HORSE-HIGH—old cowpoke parlance for what a good fence should be. Ghogre had never seen a pig, and, as he told me, "We don't have fences."

Soon Ghogre was using graph paper and pencil to sketch his own constructions, and he began submitting his work to the Los Angeles *Times*. Between airmail and courier fees, it cost more to shop his grids around than he'd be paid on publication (eighty-five dollars). In India, he was the only one of his peers for whom the crossword had become a permanent obsession; in the online forums and message boards of the American puzzle community, Ghogre found mentors, collaborators, and friends.

He began corresponding with Nancy Salomon, a legendary constructor and also a generous mentor. Over e-mail—Ghogre couldn't afford international phone calls—Salomon workshopped his theme proposals. She'd let Ghogre know when a phrase he suggested as a theme answer wasn't, as crossworders say, "in the language." Occasionally, they disagreed: Salomon had never heard of CHALK AND CHEESE, which Ghogre was pairing with BREAD AND BUTTER and COOKIES AND CREAM in a puzzle whose theme was MIDDLE AGE SPREAD. "Chalk and cheese" describes two things that are superficially alike but, on inspection, utterly different. From Salomon's confusion, Ghogre deduced that the expression was a Britishism, current in India but not in the U.S.

Salomon also coached Ghogre on another language: crosswordese. A good crossword grid should avoid words such as STOA and ANOA—the Greek colonnades and the Celebes oxen, whose common consonants and felicitous diphthongs mean they're overrepresented in puzzles, relative to their obscurity. Ghogre absorbed the dicta of the American crossword just as he'd absorbed American idioms. (A good crossword fence should be IBEX-tight, ANOA-strong, and OKAPI-high.) After dozens of attempts, one of his puzzles was accepted by the Los Angeles *Times*. Ghogre's thank-you note to Salomon is jittery with gratitude:

> . . . you cant imagine how happy i am . . . after 12 yrs of dailysolving. . . this is a fitting fruit for all the effort and passion . . .
>
> many thanks to you Nancy . .in Indian culture, one expresses their gratitude to teachers/seniors/elders by touching their feet . .one day i want to touch you feet too . . . if u dont mind . . . as token of my appreciation of your kind gesture to help am unknown like me . . .

How American is the crossword? Despite its aura of sophistication, the black-and-white grid has also been seen as anesthetizing American kitsch. In the "Weird Al" Yankovic song "The Biggest Ball of Twine in Minnesota," a family piles into a '53 DeSoto with "crossword puzzles, Spider-Man comics / and Mama's homemade rhubarb pie." Dead Kennedys, in their song "Drug Me," from 1980, lump the puzzle in with markers of insensate consumerism, as though the black-and-white grid were a bar code: "Drug me with your sleeping pills / Drug me with your crossword puzzles / Drug me with your magazines / Drug me with your fuck machines." Head down in a crossword, you may as well be asleep.

But the crossword, like many American triumphs, is the invention of an immigrant. Arthur Wynne was born on June 22, 1871, in Liverpool, England, where his father edited the Liverpool *Mercury*. At nineteen, he left for Pittsburgh—one of nine million migrants who came to America from Liverpool between 1830 and 1930. By 1913, Wynne was editing the FUN supplement of the New York *World*, which teemed with riddles, jokes, comics, and other frivolities. Charged with expanding its Christmas edition, he came up with the "Word-Cross." The instructions read like guidance for immigration paperwork: "Fill in the small squares with words which agree with the following definitions." The first American grid even conducts a background check: the clue at square six asks "What we all should be"; the answer is MORAL.

The crossword was an overnight success. As Alan Connor notes in his book "The Crossword Century," Stanley Newman, the longtime crossword editor for

Newsday, once quipped, "Liverpool's two greatest gifts to the world of popular culture are the Beatles and Arthur Wynne." By the twenties, America was seized by what newspapers labelled a crossword craze. A solver with a penchant for needlework sewed a quilt composed of forty-eight puzzles, one from each state in the Union. In 1924, Simon & Schuster published "The Cross Word Puzzle Book"; for the second edition, one distributor ordered a then unprecedented two hundred and fifty thousand copies. The crossword was becoming a mass movement in an era of mass movement: the Pennsylvania Railroad printed crosswords on its menus; the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad stocked its seat backs with dictionaries.

Wynne's native Britain looked on in horror, moving to close its borders to the crossword. A December, 1924, article in the Tamworth *Herald*, imperiously titled "An Enslaved America," warned of a puzzle epidemic: "In a few short weeks, it has grown from the pastime of a few ingenious idlers into a national institution." The crossword, likened to wildly proliferating hyacinths, was cast as an invasive species, indigenous to the States, but contagious; to prevent its spread, the authorities should erect a good fence. Nevertheless, in February, 1925, the London *Times* announced that crosswords had made it across the Atlantic. Within a decade, the *Telegraph*, the *Spectator*, and even the *Times* itself had added puzzles. "The nation still stands before the blast," the *Times* said, "and no man can say it will stand erect again."

When Ghogre and I met at the 2012 tournament, it was his first visit to the U.S. He imagined, between his obligations at home and the headache of the visa system, that it would be his first and last tournament, telling Shortz it was a "once in a lifetime opportunity." Days before flying in, he wrote a letter to his fellow-convention-goers, which he sent to Shortz. After not hearing back for a little while, Ghogre zipped over an apologetic follow-up, worrying that he'd overstepped. "Are you kidding?" Shortz replied. "I loved your piece. I already passed it along to the ACPT webmaster for posting on our website."

Ghogre's letter begins:

> For someone like me, who has come all the way from a small town on the outskirts of Mumbai in India, attending this occasion is close to attending the Oscars of the crossword world. Though my heart is beating at twice the speed, my chest today swells with humble pride. Being the first from India to be a part of this tournament as one of the judges is not just a milestone in my life. Back home, a number of souls has taken inspiration to dream big and achieve even bigger.

At the tournament, some six hundred competitors sat in rows in the boxy, corporate Marriott ballroom, scribbling furiously behind cardboard dividers. There were nearly four times as many competitors in the Westchester geographic division as in the entire Foreign division, which comprised mostly Canadians. Outside tournament hours, Ghogre spent the weekend sampling Americana that he'd encountered only in crosswords. He tasted his first PBJ and his first BLT, saw his first TPK, ate his fill of OREOS, and overheard someone say MY BAD (though not EGAD or NEATO, both of which, from crosswords, he thought were still commonplace).

Since 2000, Ghogre has kept a crossword diary ("my personal Wikipedia"), detailing the lexicon that solving American puzzles has revealed. There is a section on Biblical names (ENOCH, HOSEA, ENOS, ESAU) and one on American lakes and rivers (ERIE, MEAD, HURON, GILA). There is a section with clues for ERNE, TERN, and EMU ("birds which I have never seen, but I meet every day"). Recently, when Ghogre showed me the pages—dutiful tick marks next to frequently occurring answers, in the stocky, diligent handwriting of an engineer—they seemed like flash cards for a funhouse citizenship exam. I imagined Ghogre raising his right hand, swearing—AVOWING—upon an EPEE or a SNEE, and reciting lines from Melville's OMOO. When he told me the date he began journaling, March 4, I couldn't help noticing the serendipitous whiff of mobility in the date's homophone—*March forth!* "It's been an eight-thousand-mile march," Ghogre said, laughing. To both of us, every pun is a crossing: a refusal to let a string of letters mean only one thing. Ghogre said that, when he was solving, "I could not physically travel to the U.S., but I was travelling every day in my mind."

As the crossword migrated overseas, it assimilated to the places that took it in. In the U.K., a variant called the cryptic now reigns supreme. Where, for difficulty, modern American-style puzzles might resort to arcane and forbiddingly laconic clues, British cryptics build an answer up from riddle-like instructions. In a New York *Times* crossword, MIGRATE might be the solution to the clue "Move" or "Emulate Albert Einstein in 1933"; in a *Guardian* cryptic, MIGRATE could be clued by "Move to noodling ragtime." In America, "Move" is a straight-ahead definition of MIGRATE, whereas "noodling" indicates that we should rearrange the letters of "ragtime," which anagrams to "migrate."

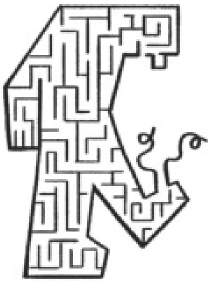
"And the boss says to enjoy the fruitcake."

Solvers exposed to both styles might emerge bilingual, literal code-switchers—but with preferences. Stephen Sondheim, an avid cryptic solver, whose stamp of approval helped the style find an audience in America and thus enacted a reverse Atlantic crossword crossing, wrote, in 1968, "There are crossword puzzles and crossword puzzles. The kind familiar to most New Yorkers is a mechanical test of tirelessly esoteric knowledge: 'Brazilian potter's wheel,' 'East Indian betel nut' and the like are typical definitions." His fantastical examples imply that esoterica are often dredged up from far-flung countries with far-fetched definitions. When the British poet W. H. Auden, another noted crossword lover, moved back to Oxford from New York, he published a farewell letter to America in the *Times:*

> People ask me if I shall miss the "cultural life" here. My answer: I have never taken part in it. . . . My cultural life is confined to reading, listening to records of classical music, and solving crossword puzzles. . . . At this point I must say that the crossword in *The New York Times* frequently drives me up the wall with rage because of the lack of precision in its clues. . . . The clues in British crosswords may be more complicated, but they are always fair. E.g., *Song goes dry for a ruined Dean*. Answer: *Serenade*. . . .
>
> Whoever invented the myth that America is a melting pot? It is nothing of the kind and, as a lover of diversity, I say thank God. The Poles, the Ukrainians, the Italians, the Jews, the Puerto Ricans, who are my neighbors, may not be the same as they would be in another country, but they keep their own characteristics.

In Auden's image of America, crosswords, culture, and immigration are inextricable. He invokes the original sense of "melting pot," in which, as an 1875 article put it, "the individuality of the immigrant" melts into uniformity "in the democratic alembic like chips of brass." The crossword alembic does something similar to foreign languages, burning off punctuation, spaces between words, and diacritical marks, until they are naturalized. An analysis by Charles Kurzman and Josh Katz of 2,092,375 New York *Times* clue-and-answer pairs shows that words like NADA lose their Spanishness over time: clues go from, say, "Nothing, in Navarra" to, simply, "Zilch." But, Kurzman and Katz conclude, puzzle parochialism is actually deepening: "the [*Times*] puzzle today uses one-third fewer non-English clues and answers than it did at its peak in 1966, and makes two-thirds fewer international references than its peak in 1943." Globalization, waves of immigration, and hiring efforts encouraging diversity may have remapped the newspaper's reporting desks, but "when we turn from the *New York Times* news pages to the puzzle page, the rest of the world fades away."

Non-English words are often, as Auden implied, represented absent "their own characteristics." At worst, the puzzle inflects a clue or an answer with negative, sometimes racist, connotations, as when ILLEGAL was clued in the New York *Times* as recently as 2012 as "One caught by border patrol." Ghogre recalls the sense of defamiliarization he felt when, say, seeing the clue "Unstitched garment" for SARI: "un-stitched" appears in the first sentence of the "Sari" Wikipedia page, but he says it's a feature of the item that no Indian national would notice. In his 2012 A.C.P.T. letter, otherwise a friendly salvo, Ghogre mentions that American puzzles offer a narrow aperture through which to view Indian culture, citing the "usual suspects" of NAAN, RAJA, RANI, SARI, DELHI, SITAR, RAVI, NEHRU, and so on. It felt flattening, doubly so when clues had inaccuracies, as if the words were tchotchkes bought by the cosmopolitan solver and deposited on the mantelpiece of the grid.



The American crossword's misfires aren't preordained. If the British cryptic is predicated on riddles, its composers looking for words like LOOKING, which they can decompose into slippery cluable units (LOO + KING; an anagram of OK LINGO), then the three aspects of American puzzles—its marquee entries (*theme*), surrounding words (*fill*), and their definitions (*clues*)—are more pliable zones for constructors to politicize. Kurzman and Katz's analysis ends in 2015; since then, much effort has been devoted to making the puzzle respectfully worldly, both within the borders of the *Times* grid and without.

In 2021, the psychologist and puzzlemaker Erica Hsiung Wojcik published the Expanded Crossword Name Database, a "list of names, places and things that represent groups, identities and people often excluded from crossword grids." Because of English's consonant-heavy phonotactics, crossword constructors make use of vowel-heavy French loanwords to fill out the grid—ETE, OUI, EPEE. That's also, perhaps, why we know Jean AUEL, EERO Saarinen, all the canonical IRAs. If vowelly nouns are so useful, why not arm constructors with an updated canon: Why not put EULA Biss, Michaela COEL, or YAA Gyasi in a crossword? One solver's trivia is another's lived lexicon; what's "fair" to W. H. Auden might keep newbie solvers on the other side of the fence.

Most constructors use software assistance to build their grids, including a word-list file where thousands of entries are ranked by their crossword worthiness. Higher-scored words pop up as suggested fill more often; a new clueing angle might lead a constructor to rescore a word, as if on appeal. Nancy Serrano-Wu, a constructor and an immigration attorney, recently clued TPS not as the usual "Festoons with Charmin, informally" (TPS was a lowly 25 in my word list; I won't use any word under 50) but by way of Temporary Protected Status, the immigration relief granted to many Ukrainians, Afghans, and Venezuelans. (I've since bumped it to a 50.) Wojcik clued VIET not as "___ Cong" but as "___ Thanh Nguyen, Pulitzer-winning author of 'The Sympathizer.'" And, given the U.S.'s enormous Spanish-speaking population, the constructor Brooke Husic often writes clues in what she calls "stealth Spanish," where bilingual cross-talk obviates the need for disambiguation: "Hand it over!" might clue the imperative ¡DAME! "Pies for a social distancer" is SEIS, or six; the pun shakes off the othering manacles of italicized, "foreign" words. In all of these cases, the editor can override a constructor's original angle; Will Shortz in particular is known for rewriting up to ninety per cent of a submission's clues. To get something new accepted, constructors load a clue with the kind of accolades—like Nguyen's Pulitzer—that might adorn an EB-1A application.

Ghogre, for his part, preaches "crossword diplomacy." His second *Times* puzzle, a 2017 collaboration with the veteran constructor Brendan Emmett Quigley, ran on the Fourth of July. Its marquee answers are JAY GATSBY, YOU ARE NOT ALONE, ELLE MACPHERSON, and WHY BOTHER. Each begins with a spelled-out version of the letters "J," "U," "L," "Y": a fourth of the word JULY. The consul general in Mumbai noticed the puzzle and invited Ghogre to a celebration of America's Independence Day. The consulate asked the *Times* to print five hundred additional copies of the crossword, to distribute to guests. Shortz autographed a copy, as did Quigley, Ghogre, and, at the event, the consul general, who wrote below his signature, "This is a great symbol of U.S.-India dosti." *Dosti* means "friendship" in Hindi. I didn't know the term, but I'm glad to have learned it. One day, you might see it in a crossword.

Harry Houdini, the most famous escapist in the history of magic, was born Erik Weisz in Budapest in 1874. In the book "Houdini's Box," the British psychoanalyst Adam Phillips describes how Weisz's family, which tried and failed to assimilate to the commercial churn of the New World, raised "a child who would defy nature, confound gravity," and "devote his life to the performance of a violent parody of assimilation." Where his parents either couldn't or wouldn't adapt, Houdini "would be the man who could adapt to anything *and* escape from it." Before Erik Weisz became Harry Houdini, he had another identity. Phillips writes:

> He called himself—and this self-renaming was crucial to the person he was making himself out to be—Ehrich, The Prince of the Air (as a crossword puzzle clue to his life, it is worth noting that this new given name has "rich" as its second syllable, just as "Houdini" would have "who" as its first).

A "crossword puzzle clue" to a man who escaped boxes for a living, but also a clue to those who escaped immigration narratives and made it into the boxes of the crossword. As a crossword writer myself, and as the son of an immigrant, I've always found world-making through wordplay intuitive, almost fated. My father signs his e-mails and texts ABBADAD, concatenating the Hebrew transliteration for "father" with the English; the string appears to me as an alien rhyme scheme, the specs of a poetic septet for an as yet undiscovered form. The writer Ocean Vuong has said that his late mother, who neither read nor understood much English, would sit facing the audience at her son's poetry readings, fluent at least in the language of bodily rending, of visible transport and escape. I imagine my mother, a Moroccan Israeli immigrant whose written English is spotty, going over to customers at the restaurant where she waited tables, scowling as they worked one of my crosswords instead of calculating the tip.

Once, a friend remarked that if an author were to give a crossword writer a name in a work of fiction, you could do worse than Natan Last. My first name, derived from the Hebrew for "gift," is a palindrome, spelled identically forward and back, a round trip of letters; my last name is autological—a word that describes itself, such as "pentasyllabic." When a customs officer, glancing at my passport, mispronounces my first name, I feel at once like an outsider and like someone else, someone new; if the officer riffs on my last name being Last, I'm quick to develop the joke.

Perhaps this is why the crossword has long kept company with émigré writers. In Berlin in 1924, as the crossword craze raged in America, Vladimir Nabokov published the first known Russian crosswords (initially called *kreslovitsa*, ultimately *krossvords*) in *Rul*, the émigré newspaper founded by his father. The American-style puzzles afforded Nabokov a fresh point of view; one clue asks, rhyming with Arthur Wynne's first Word-Cross, "What the Bolsheviks will do," with the answer being Disappear. Nabokov's fiction brims with anagrammatic avatars of the author: Vivian Darkbloom (from "Lolita"), Adam von Librikov ("Transparent Things"), Bladvak Vinomori ("King, Queen, Knave"), Baron Klim Avidov ("Ada, or Ardor"). Immigration is an occasion for "self-renaming," exposing, as one of Nabokov's characters notices, the fact that all names—the ones we come into the world with and the ones we make a new world with—are formed from the same set of letters; Vladimir Nabokov knows that Vladimir Nabokov is, too, a fiction. He seems to know it better for having written crosswords. "Definition is always finite," Fyodor says in Nabokov's "The Gift," "but I keep straining for the faraway; I search beyond the barricade (of words, of senses, of the world) for infinity."

The writer Georges Perec's most famous work is likely his lipogrammatic "La Disparition" ("A Void"), a novel composed entirely without the letter "E." He also wrote a moving book about Ellis Island and immigration, a weekly crossword for *Le Point*, and the novel "Life: A User's Manual," which features a started but uncompleted crossword grid. When I first saw it, it felt like the ultimate ideogram for the hybrid crossworder-novelist-migrant: the half-finished puzzle, always anagramming, escaping and assimilating at the same time. Writing crossword clues, Perec has said, is like "a stroll in the land of words, intended to uncover, in the imprecise neighborhood that constitutes the definition . . . the fragile and unique location where it will be simultaneously revealed and hidden."

When, in December, 2022, Mangesh Ghogre came to the U.S. on his EB-1A, we met for lunch in midtown. Although I'd worked for a refugee-resettlement nonprofit nearby for three years, I couldn't remember any suitable lunch spots. It turned out not to matter. All the storefronts had, during COVID, anagrammed or rearranged themselves into other eateries: PRET A MANGER had become CHIPOTLE; TWO FORKS was FIVE GUYS. At a ramen joint with a decent lunch special, Ghogre explained that although this phase of his immigration tale was over, there was much to do. Find an apartment in New Jersey. Enroll his children, Eva (named in part for his favorite crossword answer) and Advait, in school. Though the EB-1A does not require one have a job lined up in America, applicants must explain how they intend to continue working in their area of "expertise." On his application, Ghogre expressed interest in eventually owning a puzzle company. Since he's an I.P.O. banker by trade, he wants to list his own firm, and he already has the four-letter ticker picked out: CLUE.

"Fill in the *crossword* grid," the scholar Gareth Farmer suggests, "and you get an epic." Ghogre continues to imbue each grid he makes with his own perspective, stretching the horizon of common knowledge. He's proud of a recent clue for EPICS, normally "Iliad and Odyssey, for two" or " 'Beowulf' and 'Paradise Lost.'" Ghogre's clue was "The Hindu 'Ramayana' and others." These little shifts can add up. ♦

A GLOSSARY OF LAUGHS

BY BRIAN PARK AND JENNY ARIMOTO

". . . Ha!" You're at a cocktail party and someone just made a reference to the Kenneth Lonergan play "This Is Our Youth" that you didn't find particularly funny, but you still want everyone to know that you understood it.

"Haha" Your best friend teases you about your small feet—something that you're actually insecure about—but it's totally O.K. Yep, for sure.

"Hahahahahahahahahaha" Your seven-year-old niece is telling you a twenty-minute knock-knock joke that makes absolutely zero sense.

"Haha?" You're at a comedy show and your sister's boyfriend, Darren, is halfway through his tight five about how he hates his relationship, but then you look at your sister and she's laughing.

"Haha . . . ha" Your bodega guy shares some piping-hot unsolicited political takes on the war in Ukraine that you brush off because it's the only place near your apartment with a decent sandwich.

"HAHAhahaHA" You're on a second date with someone out of your league whom you haven't kissed yet and they're telling you a mediocre story about how they almost got arrested in high school for public urination.

"Heh . . . wow" A friend of a friend's acquaintance trauma-dumps on you, unprompted, and you're trying to buy yourself some time to figure out how to respond.

"Hmm, that's funny" You hear something genuinely funny.

"HAhAAAhaAAh" You're at a party and your ex is ten feet away and you want them to know that you're having an amazing time and that your life has been perfect for the past three months that you definitely didn't spend watching "Real Housewives" and crying.

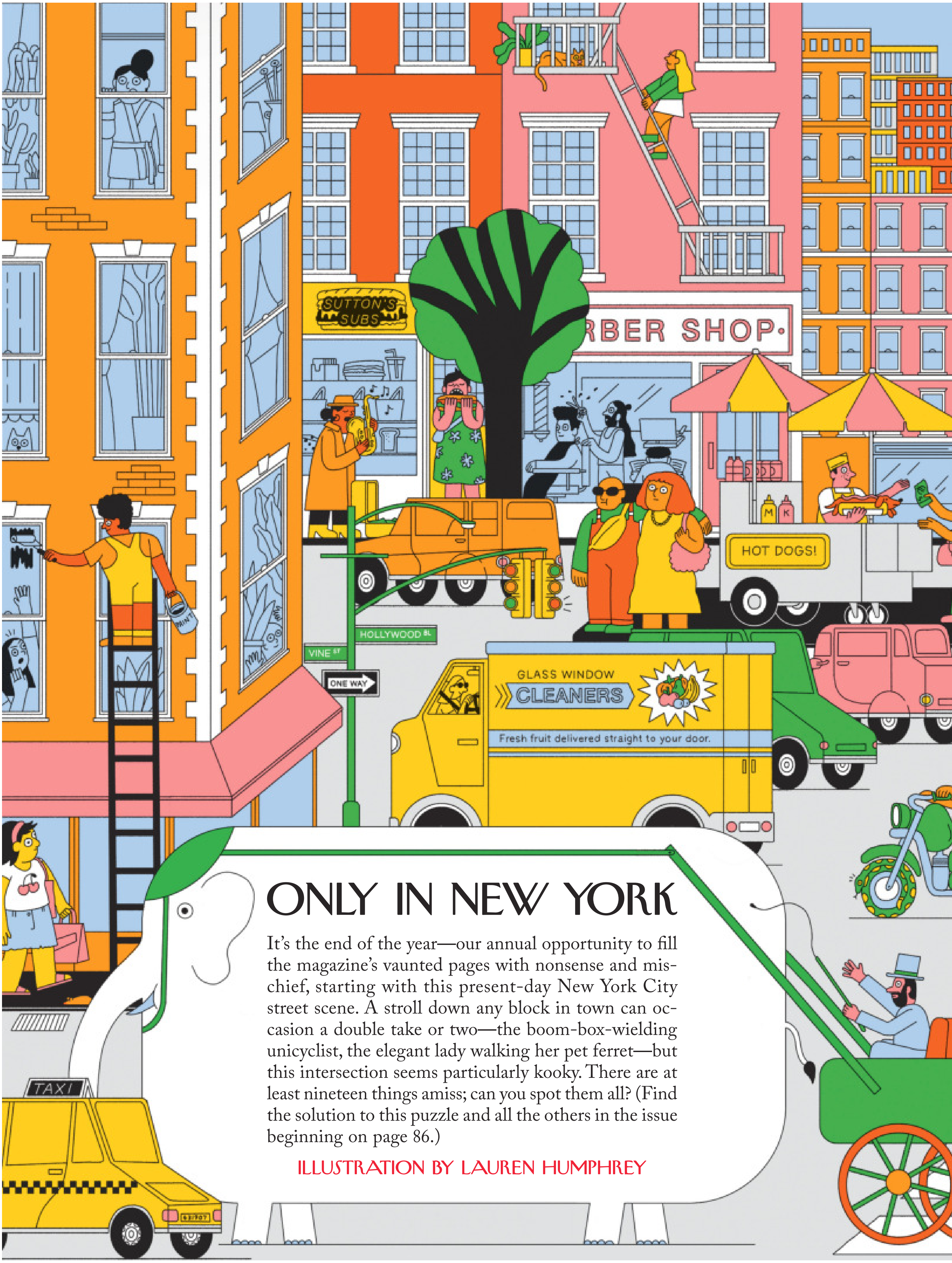
"Huh-huh" Your boss's boss cracks a vaguely inappropriate joke about cheating on his wife, but performance reviews are around the corner.

"( )" You're fake laughing during a work Zoom on mute.

"Hahahahahaha" You're watching "Superbad" with friends who start discussing, in detail, a party that you weren't invited to. You don't want them to know your feelings are hurt, so you hyperfixate on the movie. Will McLovin's fake I.D. work at the liquor store? Would you have had your first kiss playing spin the bottle at Stacy McFadden's pool party last weekend if you'd been invited?

"Hehe" You're doomscrolling for two hours in bed when, suddenly, you stumble upon an adorable video of a disoriented bear waking up from hibernation. ♦

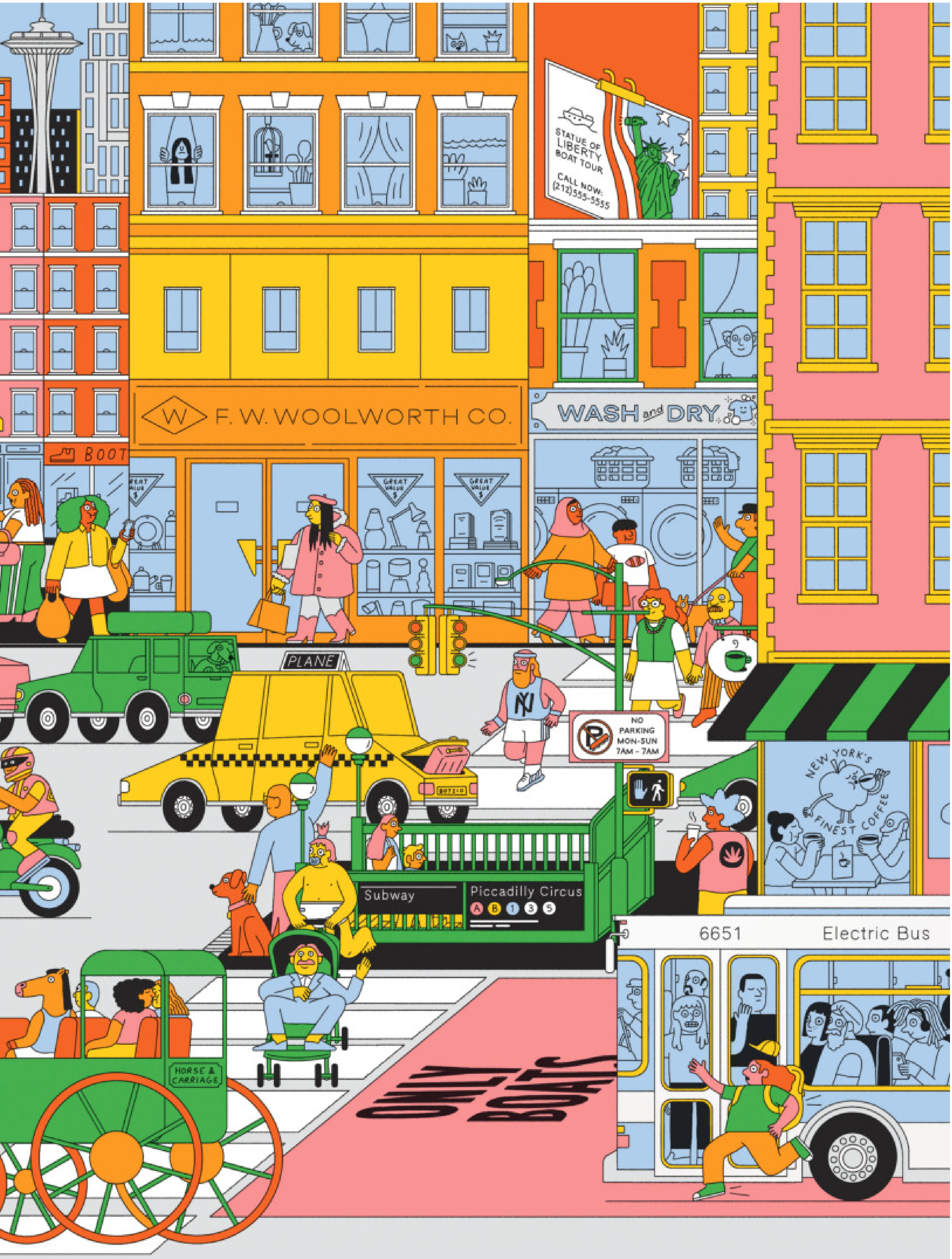
ILLUSTRATION BY LUCI GUTIÉRREZ


SUTTON'S SUBS
RBER SHOP
M K
HOT DOGS!
HOLLYWOOD BL
VINE ST
ONE WAY
GLASS WINDOW
CLEANERS
Fresh fruit delivered straight to your door.
TAXI

ONLY IN NEW YORK

It’s the end of the year—our annual opportunity to fill the magazine’s vaunted pages with nonsense and mischief, starting with this present-day New York City street scene. A stroll down any block in town can occasion a double take or two—the boom-box-wielding unicyclist, the elegant lady walking her pet ferret—but this intersection seems particularly kooky. There are at least nineteen things amiss; can you spot them all? (Find the solution to this puzzle and all the others in the issue beginning on page 86.)

ILLUSTRATION BY LAUREN HUMPHREY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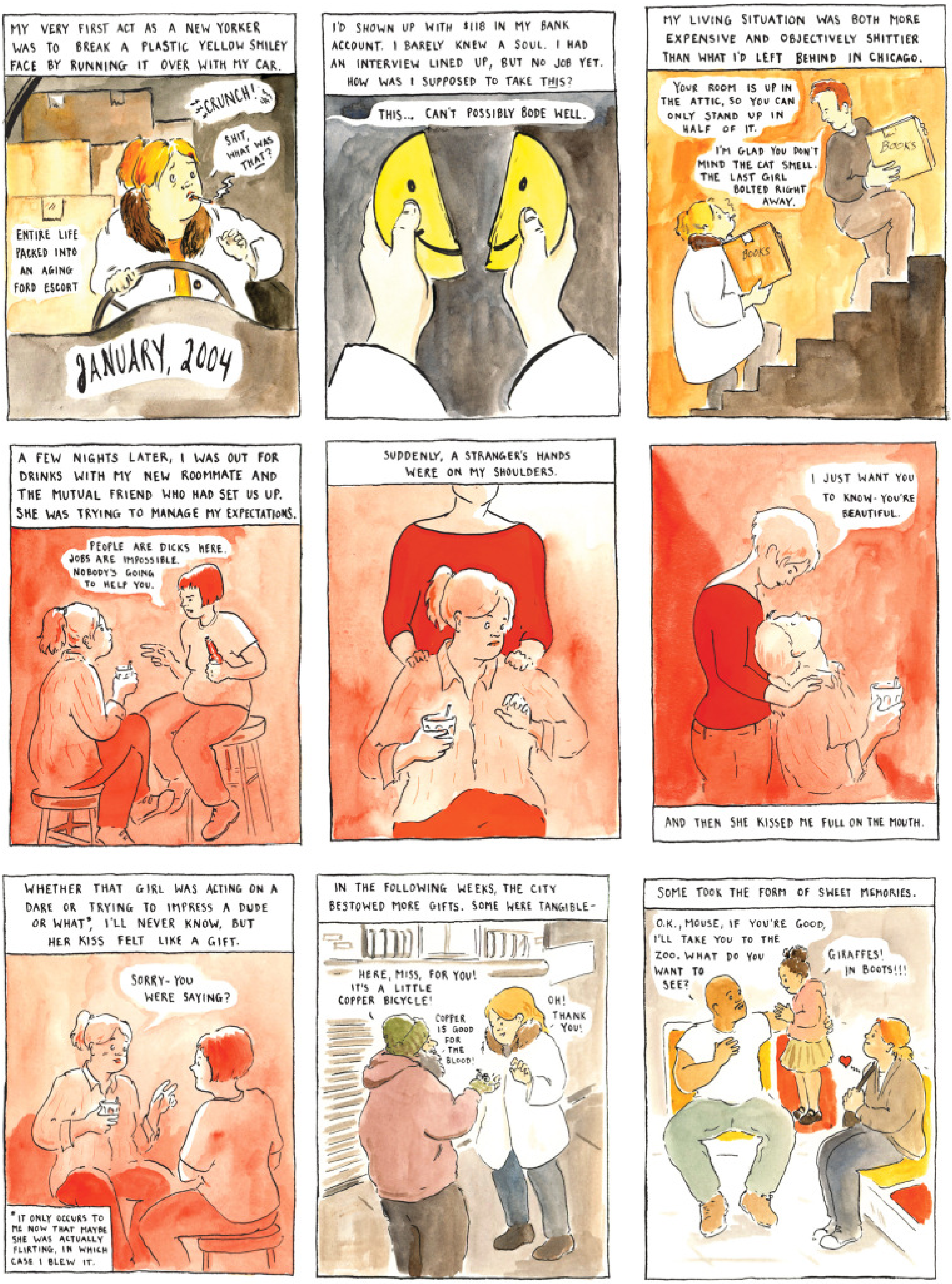
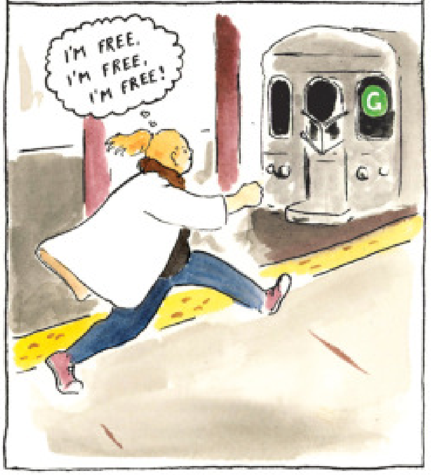
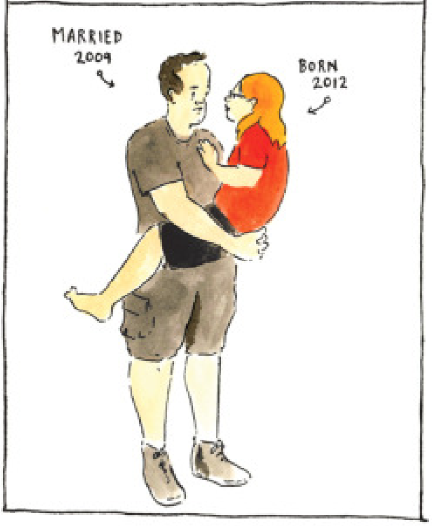
DUMB LUCK BY EMILY FLAKE


MY VERY FIRST ACT AS A NEW YORKER WAS TO BREAK A PLASTIC YELLOW SMILEY FACE BY RUNNING IT OVER WITH MY CAR.
CRUNCH!
SHIT, WHAT WAS THAT?
ENTIRE LIFE PACKED INTO AN AGING FORD ESCORT
JANUARY, 2004
I'D SHOWN UP WITH $118 IN MY BANK ACCOUNT. I BARELY KNEW A SOUL. I HAD AN INTERVIEW LINED UP, BUT NO JOB YET. HOW WAS I SUPPOSED TO TAKE THIS?
THIS... CAN'T POSSIBLY BODE WELL.
MY LIVING SITUATION WAS BOTH MORE EXPENSIVE AND OBJECTIVELY SHITTIER THAN WHAT I'D LEFT BEHIND IN CHICAGO.
YOUR ROOM IS UP IN THE ATTIC, SO YOU CAN ONLY STAND UP IN HALF OF IT.
I'M GLAD YOU DON'T MIND THE CAT SMELL. THE LAST GIRL BOLTED RIGHT AWAY.
BOOKS
BOOKS
A FEW NIGHTS LATER, I WAS OUT FOR DRINKS WITH MY NEW ROOMMATE AND THE MUTUAL FRIEND WHO HAD SET US UP. SHE WAS TRYING TO MANAGE MY EXPECTATIONS.
PEOPLE ARE DICKS HERE. JOBS ARE IMPOSSIBLE. NOBODY'S GOING TO HELP YOU.
SUDDENLY, A STRANGER'S HANDS WERE ON MY SHOULDERS.
I JUST WANT YOU TO KNOW- YOU'RE BEAUTIFUL.
AND THEN SHE KISSED ME FULL ON THE MOUTH.
WHETHER THAT GIRL WAS ACTING ON A DARE OR TRYING TO IMPRESS A DUDE OR WHAT*, I'LL NEVER KNOW, BUT HER KISS FELT LIKE A GIFT.
SORRY- YOU WERE SAYING?
*IT ONLY OCCURS TO ME NOW THAT MAYBE SHE WAS ACTUALLY FLIRTING, IN WHICH CASE I BLEW IT.
IN THE FOLLOWING WEEKS, THE CITY BESTOWED MORE GIFTS. SOME WERE TANGIBLE-
HERE, MISS, FOR YOU! IT'S A LITTLE COPPER BICYCLE!
COPPER IS GOOD FOR THE BLOOD!
OH! THANK YOU!
SOME TOOK THE FORM OF SWEET MEMORIES.
O.K., MOUSE, IF YOU'RE GOOD, I'LL TAKE YOU TO THE ZOO. WHAT DO YOU WANT TO SEE?
GIRAFFES! IN BOOTS!!!

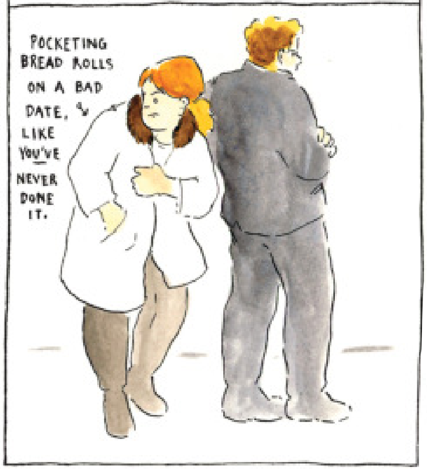
SOME WERE INEXPLICABLE, LIKE WHEN I WAS RUNNING TO CATCH THE G TO A JOB I HATED AND FELT A SURGE OF WILD AND UNEXPECTED JOY.


I'M FREE, I'M FREE, I'M FREE!
G

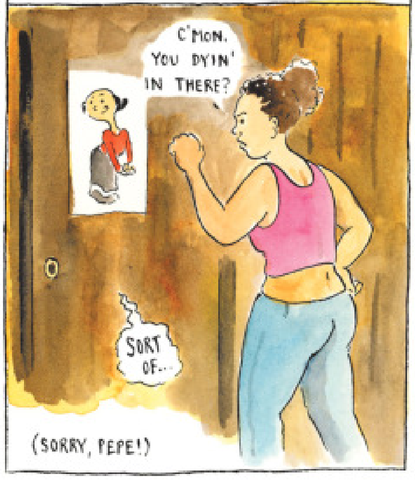
TO SAY NOTHING OF THE TRUE GIFTS THAT WERE IN MY FUTURE.


MARRIED 2009
BORN 2012

I DON'T MEAN TO IMPLY THAT IT WAS ALL PUPPIES AND RAINBOWS. I WAS ABSURDLY BROKE MOST OF THE TIME. I MADE QUESTIONABLE ROMANTIC DECISIONS.


POCKETING BREAD ROLLS ON A BAD DATE, LIKE YOU'VE NEVER DONE IT.

I THREW UP IN THE BATHROOM AT MONTERO'S MORE OFTEN THAN WAS STRICTLY NECESSARY.

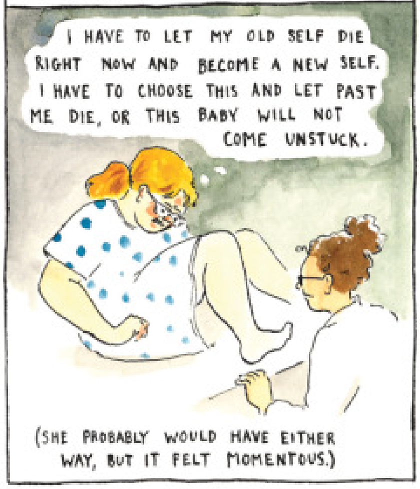

C'MON. YOU DYIN' IN THERE?
SORT OF...

(SORRY, PEPE!)

NOBODY MADE ME MOVE TO NEW YORK. I WAS LUCKY THAT I WAS YOUNG AND RESPONSIBLE FOR NO ONE BUT MYSELF.

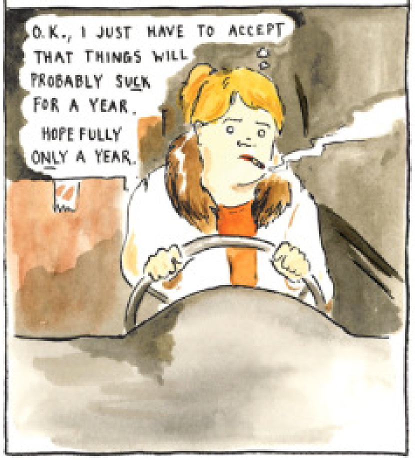
THE STAKES FELT HIGH, BUT THEY WERE ONLY PERSONAL. IF I WANTED TO BLOW UP MY LIFE AND SEE IF I COULD "MAKE IT" IN NEW YORK, IT WAS ONLY MY SKIN IN THE GAME.

WHEN I GAVE BIRTH TO MY DAUGHTER, I HAD WHAT I CAN ONLY DESCRIBE AS A DEEPLY PHYSICAL EPIPHANY.

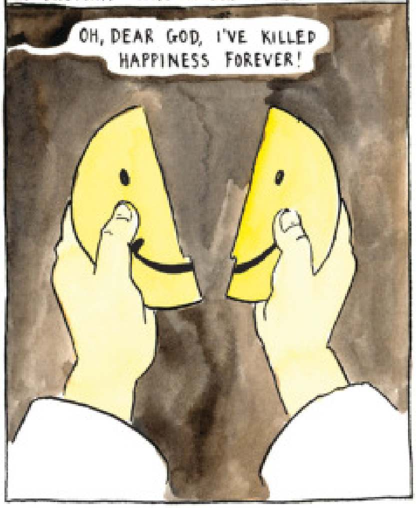

I HAVE TO LET MY OLD SELF DIE RIGHT NOW AND BECOME A NEW SELF. I HAVE TO CHOOSE THIS AND LET PAST ME DIE, OR THIS BABY WILL NOT COME UNSTUCK.

(SHE PROBABLY WOULD HAVE EITHER WAY, BUT IT FELT MOMENTOUS.)

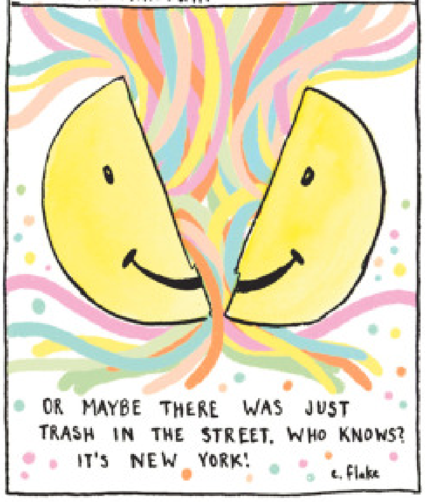
I HAD ABSOLUTELY NO IDEA WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO ME IN NEW YORK. BUT I'D MADE A CHOICE TO LET PAST ME DIE.


O.K., I JUST HAVE TO ACCEPT THAT THINGS WILL PROBABLY SUCK FOR A YEAR. HOPEFULLY ONLY A YEAR.

BUT NOW I THINK MAYBE THE THING I THOUGHT WAS A BAD OMEN...


OH, DEAR GOD, I'VE KILLED HAPPINESS FOREVER!

WAS ACTUALLY A SEAL BREAKING OPEN, ALLOWING MY LIFE TO COME THROUGH.



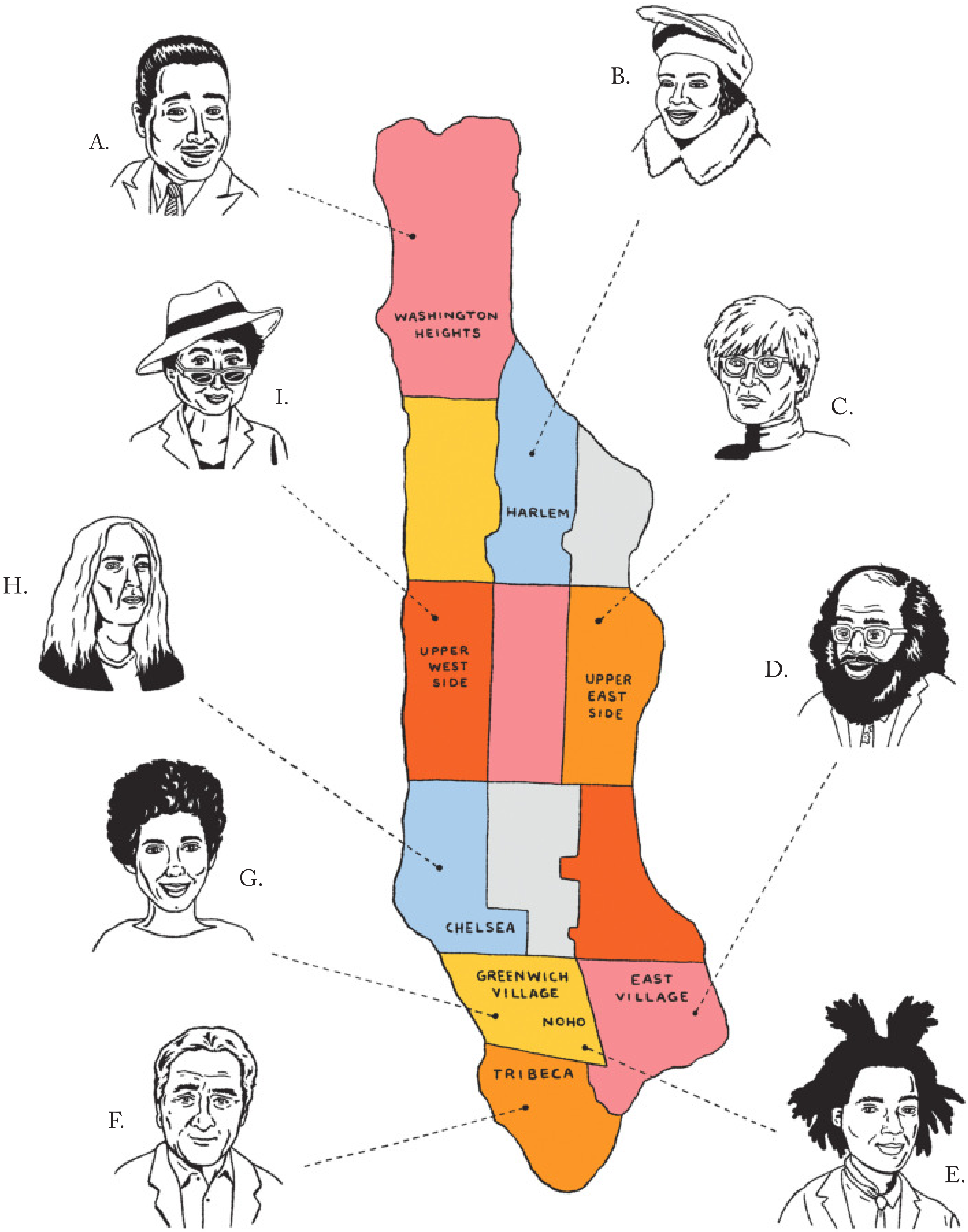
OR MAYBE THERE WAS JUST TRASH IN THE STREET. WHO KNOWS? IT'S NEW YORK!

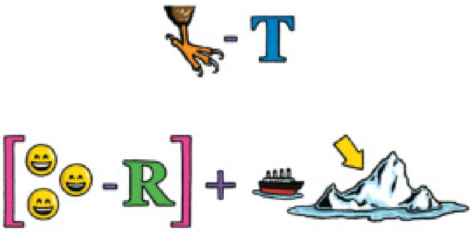
e. Flake

SEEING STARS

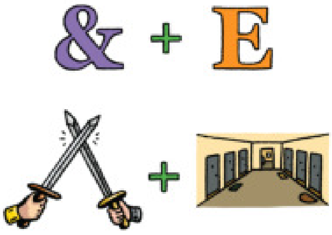
BY SUERYNN LEE AND LIZ MAYNES-AMINZADE

Below are nine notable Manhattanites and the neighborhoods where they famously lived. Decipher the picture puzzles on the opposite page to reveal the celebrities' names, then match the names with the portraits on the map.

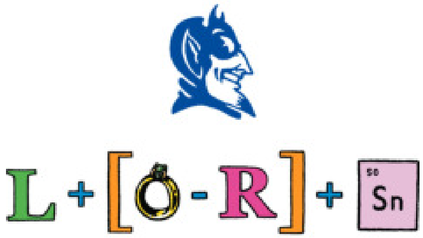

A.
B.
WASHINGTON HEIGHTS
I.
C.
HARLEM
H.
UPPER WEST SIDE
UPPER EAST SIDE
D.
G.
CHELSEA
GREENWICH VILLAGE
EAST VILLAGE
NOHO
TRIBECA
F.
E.



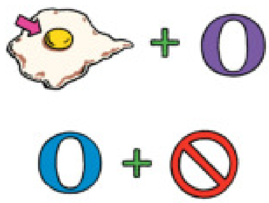
1. ____________________



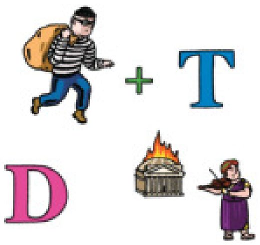
2. ____________________



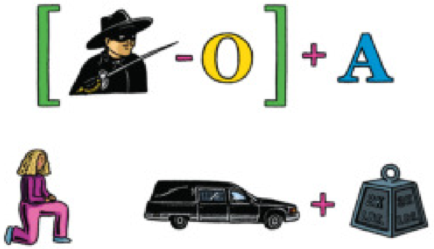
3. ____________________



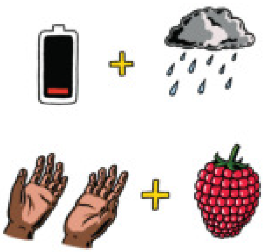
4. ____________________



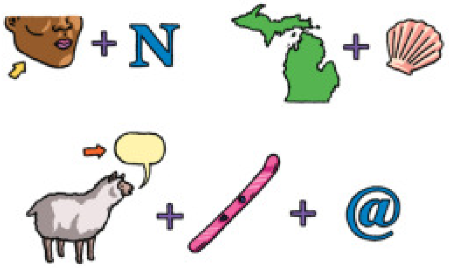
5. ____________________



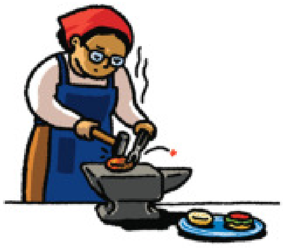
6. ____________________



7. ____________________



8. ____________________



9. ____________________

Match the name with the portrait:

1. ____ 2. ____ 3. ____ 4. ____ 5. ____

6. ____ 7. ____ 8. ____ 9. ____

EVERY CHOICE OF COFFEE AVAILABLE ON CHRISTOPHER ST, NEW YORK

ESPRESSO, DOUBLE ESPRESSO, QUADRUPLE ESPRESSO, RED EYE, SMALL COLD BREW , SMALL COLD BREW WITH VANILLA, SMALL COLD BREW WITH CARAMEL, SMALL COLD BREW WITH CHAI, SMALL COLD BREW WITH CHOCOLATE, SMALL COLD BREW WITH HAZELNUT, SMALL COLD BREW WITH LAVENDER, SMALL COLD BREW WITH ROSE WATERS, SMALL COLD BREW WITH HONEY, SMALL COLD BREW WITH CARDAMOM, SMALL COLD BREW WITH CINNAMON, SMALL COLD BREW WITH MASALA, SMALL COLD BREW WITH TUMERIC GINGER, SMALL COLD BREW WITH CHAGA, SMALL COLD BREW WITH PUMPKIN SPICE, SMALL CAPPUCCINO , SMALL CAPPUCCINO WITH VANILLA, SMALL CAPPUCCINO WITH CARAMEL, SMALL CAPPUCCINO WITH CHAI, SMALL CAPPUCCINO WITH CHOCOLATE, SMALL CAPPUCCINO WITH HAZELNUT, SMALL CAPPUCCINO WITH LAVENDER, SMALL CAPPUCCINO WITH ROSE WATERS, SMALL CAPPUCCINO WITH HONEY, SMALL CAPPUCCINO WITH CARDAMOM, SMALL CAPPUCCINO WITH CINNAMON, SMALL CAPPUCCINO WITH MASALA, SMALL CAPPUCCINO WITH TUMERIC GINGER, SMALL CAPPUCCINO WITH CHAGA, SMALL CAPPUCCINO WITH PUMPKIN SPICE, SMALL MOCHA , SMALL MOCHA WITH VANILLA, SMALL MOCHA WITH CARAMEL, SMALL MOCHA WITH CHAI, SMALL MOCHA WITH CHOCOLATE, SMALL MOCHA WITH HAZELNUT, SMALL MOCHA WITH LAVENDER, SMALL MOCHA WITH ROSE WATERS, SMALL MOCHA WITH HONEY, SMALL MOCHA WITH CARDAMOM, SMALL MOCHA WITH CINNAMON, SMALL MOCHA WITH MASALA, SMALL MOCHA WITH TUMERIC GINGER, SMALL MOCHA WITH CHAGA, SMALL MOCHA WITH PUMPKIN SPICE, SMALL LATTE , SMALL LATTE WITH VANILLA, SMALL LATTE WITH CARAMEL, SMALL LATTE WITH CHAI, SMALL LATTE WITH CHOCOLATE, SMALL LATTE WITH HAZELNUT, SMALL LATTE WITH LAVENDER, SMALL LATTE WITH ROSE WATERS, SMALL LATTE WITH HONEY, SMALL LATTE WITH CARDAMOM, SMALL LATTE WITH CINNAMON, SMALL LATTE WITH MASALA, SMALL LATTE WITH TUMERIC GINGER, SMALL LATTE WITH CHAGA, SMALL LATTE WITH PUMPKIN SPICE, SMALL MACCHIATO , SMALL MACCHIATO WITH VANILLA, SMALL MACCHIATO WITH CARAMEL, SMALL MACCHIATO WITH CHAI, SMALL MACCHIATO WITH CHOCOLATE, SMALL MACCHIATO WITH HAZELNUT, SMALL MACCHIATO WITH LAVENDER, SMALL MACCHIATO WITH ROSE WATERS, SMALL MACCHIATO WITH HONEY, SMALL MACCHIATO WITH CARDAMOM, SMALL MACCHIATO WITH CINNAMON, SMALL MACCHIATO WITH MASALA, SMALL MACCHIATO WITH TUMERIC GINGER, SMALL MACCHIATO WITH CHAGA, SMALL MACCHIATO WITH PUMPKIN SPICE, SMALL FRAPPE , SMALL FRAPPE WITH VANILLA, SMALL FRAPPE WITH CARAMEL, SMALL FRAPPE WITH CHAI, SMALL FRAPPE WITH CHOCOLATE, SMALL FRAPPE WITH HAZELNUT, SMALL FRAPPE WITH LAVENDER, SMALL FRAPPE WITH ROSE WATERS, SMALL FRAPPE WITH HONEY, SMALL FRAPPE WITH CARDAMOM, SMALL FRAPPE WITH CINNAMON, SMALL FRAPPE WITH MASALA, SMALL FRAPPE WITH TUMERIC GINGER, SMALL FRAPPE WITH CHAGA, SMALL FRAPPE WITH PUMPKIN SPICE, SMALL AMERICANO , SMALL AMERICANO WITH VANILLA, SMALL AMERICANO WITH CARAMEL, SMALL AMERICANO WITH CHAI, SMALL AMERICANO WITH CHOCOLATE, SMALL AMERICANO WITH HAZELNUT, SMALL AMERICANO WITH LAVENDER, SMALL AMERICANO WITH ROSE WATERS, SMALL AMERICANO WITH HONEY, SMALL AMERICANO WITH CARDAMOM, SMALL AMERICANO WITH CINNAMON, SMALL AMERICANO WITH MASALA, SMALL AMERICANO WITH TUMERIC GINGER, SMALL AMERICANO WITH CHAGA, SMALL AMERICANO WITH PUMPKIN SPICE, SMALL FLAT WHITE , SMALL FLAT WHITE WITH VANILLA, SMALL FLAT WHITE WITH CARAMEL, SMALL FLAT WHITE WITH CHAI, SMALL FLAT WHITE WITH CHOCOLATE, SMALL FLAT WHITE WITH HAZELNUT, SMALL FLAT WHITE WITH LAVENDER, SMALL FLAT WHITE WITH ROSE WATERS, SMALL FLAT WHITE WITH HONEY, SMALL FLAT WHITE WITH CARDAMOM, SMALL FLAT WHITE WITH CINNAMON, SMALL FLAT WHITE WITH MASALA, SMALL FLAT WHITE WITH TUMERIC GINGER, SMALL FLAT WHITE WITH CHAGA, SMALL FLAT WHITE WITH PUMPKIN SPICE, SMALL OAT COLD BREW , SMALL OAT COLD BREW WITH VANILLA, SMALL OAT COLD BREW WITH CARAMEL, SMALL OAT COLD BREW WITH CHAI, SMALL OAT COLD BREW WITH CHOCOLATE, SMALL OAT COLD BREW WITH HAZELNUT, SMALL OAT COLD BREW WITH LAVENDER, SMALL OAT COLD BREW WITH ROSE WATERS, SMALL OAT COLD BREW WITH HONEY, SMALL OAT COLD BREW WITH CARDAMOM, SMALL OAT COLD BREW WITH CINNAMON, SMALL OAT COLD BREW WITH MASALA, SMALL OAT COLD BREW WITH TUMERIC GINGER, SMALL OAT COLD BREW WITH CHAGA, SMALL OAT COLD BREW WITH PUMPKIN SPICE, SMALL OAT CAPPUCCINO , SMALL OAT CAPPUCCINO WITH VANILLA, SMALL OAT CAPPUCCINO WITH CARAMEL, SMALL OAT CAPPUCCINO WITH CHAI, SMALL OAT CAPPUCCINO WITH CHOCOLATE, SMALL OAT CAPPUCCINO WITH HAZELNUT, SMALL OAT CAPPUCCINO WITH LAVENDER, SMALL OAT CAPPUCCINO WITH ROSE WATERS, SMALL OAT CAPPUCCINO WITH HONEY, SMALL OAT CAPPUCCINO WITH CARDAMOM, SMALL OAT CAPPUCCINO WITH CINNAMON, SMALL OAT CAPPUCCINO WITH MASALA, SMALL OAT CAPPUCCINO WITH TUMERIC GINGER, SMALL OAT CAPPUCCINO WITH CHAGA, SMALL OAT CAPPUCCINO WITH PUMPKIN SPICE, SMALL OAT MOCHA , SMALL OAT MOCHA WITH VANILLA, SMALL OAT MOCHA WITH CARAMEL, SMALL OAT MOCHA WITH CHAI, SMALL OAT MOCHA WITH CHOCOLATE, SMALL OAT MOCHA WITH HAZELNUT, SMALL OAT MOCHA WITH LAVENDER, SMALL OAT MOCHA WITH ROSE WATERS, SMALL OAT MOCHA WITH HONEY, SMALL OAT MOCHA WITH CARDAMOM, SMALL OAT MOCHA WITH CINNAMON, SMALL OAT MOCHA WITH MASALA, SMALL OAT MOCHA WITH TUMERIC GINGER, SMALL OAT MOCHA WITH CHAGA, SMALL OAT MOCHA WITH PUMPKIN SPICE, SMALL OAT LATTE , SMALL OAT LATTE WITH VANILLA, SMALL OAT LATTE WITH CARAMEL, SMALL OAT LATTE WITH CHAI, SMALL OAT LATTE WITH CHOCOLATE, SMALL OAT LATTE WITH HAZELNUT, SMALL OAT LATTE WITH LAVENDER, SMALL OAT LATTE WITH ROSE WATERS, SMALL OAT LATTE WITH HONEY, SMALL OAT LATTE WITH CARDAMOM, SMALL OAT LATTE WITH CINNAMON, SMALL OAT LATTE WITH MASALA, SMALL OAT LATTE WITH TUMERIC GINGER, SMALL OAT LATTE WITH CHAGA, SMALL OAT LATTE WITH PUMPKIN SPICE, SMALL OAT MACCHIATO , SMALL OAT MACCHIATO WITH VANILLA, SMALL OAT MACCHIATO WITH CARAMEL, SMALL OAT MACCHIATO WITH CHAI, SMALL OAT MACCHIATO WITH CHOCOLATE, SMALL OAT MACCHIATO WITH HAZELNUT, SMALL OAT MACCHIATO WITH LAVENDER, SMALL OAT MACCHIATO WITH ROSE WATERS, SMALL OAT MACCHIATO WITH HONEY, SMALL OAT MACCHIATO WITH CARDAMOM, SMALL OAT MACCHIATO WITH CINNAMON, SMALL OAT MACCHIATO WITH MASALA, SMALL OAT MACCHIATO WITH TUMERIC GINGER, SMALL OAT MACCHIATO WITH CHAGA, SMALL OAT MACCHIATO WITH PUMPKIN SPICE, SMALL OAT FRAPPE , SMALL OAT FRAPPE WITH VANILLA, SMALL OAT FRAPPE WITH CARAMEL, SMALL OAT FRAPPE WITH CHAI, SMALL OAT FRAPPE WITH CHOCOLATE, SMALL OAT FRAPPE WITH HAZELNUT, SMALL OAT FRAPPE WITH LAVENDER, SMALL OAT FRAPPE WITH ROSE WATERS, SMALL OAT FRAPPE WITH HONEY, SMALL OAT FRAPPE WITH CARDAMOM, SMALL OAT FRAPPE WITH CINNAMON, SMALL OAT FRAPPE WITH MASALA, SMALL OAT FRAPPE WITH TUMERIC GINGER, SMALL OAT FRAPPE WITH CHAGA, SMALL OAT FRAPPE WITH PUMPKIN SPICE, SMALL OAT AMERICANO , SMALL OAT AMERICANO WITH VANILLA, SMALL OAT AMERICANO WITH CARAMEL, SMALL OAT AMERICANO WITH CHAI, SMALL OAT AMERICANO WITH CHOCOLATE, SMALL OAT AMERICANO WITH HAZELNUT, SMALL OAT AMERICANO WITH LAVENDER, SMALL OAT AMERICANO WITH ROSE WATERS, SMALL OAT AMERICANO WITH HONEY, SMALL OAT AMERICANO WITH CARDAMOM, SMALL OAT AMERICANO WITH CINNAMON, SMALL OAT AMERICANO WITH MASALA, SMALL OAT AMERICANO WITH TUMERIC GINGER, SMALL OAT AMERICANO WITH CHAGA, SMALL OAT AMERICANO WITH PUMPKIN SPICE, SMALL OAT FLAT WHITE , SMALL OAT FLAT WHITE WITH VANILLA, SMALL OAT FLAT WHITE WITH CARAMEL, SMALL OAT FLAT WHITE WITH CHAI, SMALL OAT FLAT WHITE WITH CHOCOLATE, SMALL OAT FLAT WHITE WITH HAZELNUT, SMALL OAT FLAT WHITE WITH LAVENDER, SMALL OAT FLAT WHITE WITH ROSE WATERS, SMALL OAT FLAT WHITE WITH HONEY, SMALL OAT FLAT WHITE WITH CARDAMOM, SMALL OAT FLAT WHITE WITH CINNAMON, SMALL OAT FLAT WHITE WITH MASALA, SMALL OAT FLAT WHITE WITH TUMERIC GINGER, SMALL OAT FLAT WHITE WITH CHAGA, SMALL OAT FLAT WHITE WITH PUMPKIN SPICE, SMALL ALMOND COLD BREW , SMALL ALMOND COLD BREW WITH VANILLA, SMALL ALMOND COLD BREW WITH CARAMEL, SMALL ALMOND COLD BREW WITH CHAI, SMALL ALMOND COLD BREW WITH CHOCOLATE, SMALL ALMOND COLD BREW WITH HAZELNUT, SMALL ALMOND COLD BREW WITH LAVENDER, SMALL ALMOND COLD BREW WITH ROSE WATERS, SMALL ALMOND COLD BREW WITH HONEY, SMALL ALMOND COLD BREW WITH CARDAMOM, SMALL ALMOND COLD BREW WITH CINNAMON, SMALL ALMOND COLD BREW WITH MASALA, SMALL ALMOND COLD BREW WITH TUMERIC GINGER, SMALL ALMOND COLD BREW WITH CHAGA, SMALL ALMOND COLD BREW WITH PUMPKIN SPICE, SMALL ALMOND CAPPUCCINO , SMALL ALMOND CAPPUCCINO WITH VANILLA, SMALL ALMOND CAPPUCCINO WITH CARAMEL, SMALL ALMOND CAPPUCCINO WITH CHAI, SMALL ALMOND CAPPUCCINO WITH CHOCOLATE, SMALL ALMOND CAPPUCCINO WITH HAZELNUT, SMALL ALMOND CAPPUCCINO WITH LAVENDER, SMALL ALMOND CAPPUCCINO WITH ROSE WATERS, SMALL ALMOND CAPPUCCINO WITH HONEY, SMALL ALMOND CAPPUCCINO WITH CARDAMOM, SMALL ALMOND CAPPUCCINO WITH CINNAMON, SMALL ALMOND CAPPUCCINO WITH MASALA, SMALL ALMOND CAPPUCCINO WITH TUMERIC GINGER, SMALL ALMOND CAPPUCCINO WITH CHAGA, SMALL ALMOND CAPPUCCINO WITH PUMPKIN SPICE, SMALL ALMOND MOCHA , SMALL ALMOND MOCHA WITH VANILLA, SMALL ALMOND MOCHA WITH CARAMEL, SMALL ALMOND MOCHA WITH CHAI, SMALL ALMOND MOCHA WITH CHOCOLATE, SMALL ALMOND MOCHA WITH HAZELNUT, SMALL ALMOND MOCHA WITH LAVENDER, SMALL ALMOND MOCHA WITH ROSE WATERS, SMALL ALMOND MOCHA WITH HONEY, SMALL ALMOND MOCHA WITH CARDAMOM, SMALL ALMOND MOCHA WITH CINNAMON, SMALL ALMOND MOCHA WITH MASALA, SMALL ALMOND MOCHA WITH TUMERIC GINGER, SMALL ALMOND MOCHA WITH CHAGA, SMALL ALMOND MOCHA WITH PUMPKIN SPICE, SMALL ALMOND LATTE , SMALL ALMOND LATTE WITH VANILLA, SMALL ALMOND LATTE WITH CARAMEL, SMALL ALMOND LATTE WITH CHAI, SMALL ALMOND LATTE WITH CHOCOLATE, SMALL ALMOND LATTE WITH HAZELNUT, SMALL ALMOND LATTE WITH LAVENDER, SMALL ALMOND LATTE WITH ROSE WATERS, SMALL ALMOND LATTE WITH HONEY, SMALL ALMOND LATTE WITH CARDAMOM, SMALL ALMOND LATTE WITH CINNAMON, SMALL ALMOND LATTE WITH MASALA, SMALL ALMOND LATTE WITH TUMERIC GINGER, SMALL ALMOND LATTE WITH CHAGA, SMALL ALMOND LATTE WITH PUMPKIN SPICE, SMALL ALMOND MACCHIATO , SMALL ALMOND MACCHIATO WITH VANILLA, SMALL ALMOND MACCHIATO WITH CARAMEL, SMALL ALMOND MACCHIATO WITH CHAI, SMALL ALMOND MACCHIATO WITH CHOCOLATE, SMALL ALMOND MACCHIATO WITH HAZELNUT, SMALL ALMOND MACCHIATO WITH LAVENDER, SMALL ALMOND MACCHIATO WITH ROSE WATERS, SMALL ALMOND MACCHIATO WITH HONEY, SMALL ALMOND MACCHIATO WITH CARDAMOM, SMALL ALMOND MACCHIATO WITH CINNAMON, SMALL ALMOND MACCHIATO WITH MASALA, SMALL ALMOND MACCHIATO WITH TUMERIC GINGER, SMALL ALMOND MACCHIATO WITH CHAGA, SMALL ALMOND MACCHIATO WITH PUMPKIN SPICE, SMALL ALMOND FRAPPE , SMALL ALMOND FRAPPE WITH VANILLA, SMALL ALMOND FRAPPE WITH CARAMEL, SMALL ALMOND FRAPPE WITH CHAI, SMALL ALMOND FRAPPE WITH CHOCOLATE, SMALL ALMOND FRAPPE WITH HAZELNUT, SMALL ALMOND FRAPPE WITH LAVENDER, SMALL ALMOND FRAPPE WITH ROSE WATERS, SMALL ALMOND FRAPPE WITH HONEY, SMALL ALMOND FRAPPE WITH CARDAMOM, SMALL ALMOND FRAPPE WITH CINNAMON, SMALL ALMOND FRAPPE WITH MASALA, SMALL ALMOND FRAPPE WITH TUMERIC GINGER, SMALL ALMOND FRAPPE WITH CHAGA, SMALL ALMOND FRAPPE WITH PUMPKIN SPICE, SMALL ALMOND AMERICANO , SMALL ALMOND AMERICANO WITH VANILLA, SMALL ALMOND AMERICANO WITH CARAMEL, SMALL ALMOND AMERICANO WITH CHAI, SMALL ALMOND AMERICANO WITH CHOCOLATE, SMALL ALMOND AMERICANO WITH HAZELNUT, SMALL ALMOND AMERICANO WITH LAVENDER, SMALL ALMOND 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BREW WITH CHAI, SMALL MACADAMIA COLD BREW WITH CHOCOLATE, SMALL MACADAMIA COLD BREW WITH HAZELNUT, SMALL MACADAMIA COLD BREW WITH LAVENDER, SMALL MACADAMIA COLD BREW WITH ROSE WATERS, SMALL MACADAMIA COLD BREW WITH HONEY, SMALL MACADAMIA COLD BREW WITH CARDAMOM, SMALL MACADAMIA COLD BREW WITH CINNAMON, SMALL MACADAMIA COLD BREW WITH MASALA, SMALL MACADAMIA COLD BREW WITH TUMERIC GINGER, SMALL MACADAMIA COLD BREW WITH CHAGA, SMALL MACADAMIA COLD BREW WITH PUMPKIN SPICE, SMALL MACADAMIA CAPPUCCINO , SMALL MACADAMIA CAPPUCCINO WITH VANILLA, SMALL MACADAMIA CAPPUCCINO WITH CARAMEL, SMALL MACADAMIA CAPPUCCINO WITH CHAI, SMALL MACADAMIA CAPPUCCINO WITH CHOCOLATE, SMALL MACADAMIA CAPPUCCINO WITH HAZELNUT, SMALL MACADAMIA CAPPUCCINO WITH LAVENDER, SMALL MACADAMIA CAPPUCCINO WITH ROSE WATERS, SMALL MACADAMIA CAPPUCCINO WITH HONEY, SMALL MACADAMIA CAPPUCCINO WITH CARDAMOM, SMALL MACADAMIA CAPPUCCINO WITH CINNAMON, SMALL MACADAMIA CAPPUCCINO WITH MASALA, SMALL MACADAMIA CAPPUCCINO WITH TUMERIC 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MACADAMIA LATTE WITH CINNAMON, SMALL MACADAMIA LATTE WITH MASALA, SMALL MACADAMIA LATTE WITH TUMERIC GINGER, SMALL MACADAMIA LATTE WITH CHAGA, SMALL MACADAMIA LATTE WITH PUMPKIN SPICE, SMALL MACADAMIA MACCHIATO , SMALL MACADAMIA MACCHIATO WITH VANILLA, SMALL MACADAMIA MACCHIATO WITH CARAMEL, SMALL MACADAMIA MACCHIATO WITH CHAI, SMALL MACADAMIA MACCHIATO WITH CHOCOLATE, SMALL MACADAMIA MACCHIATO WITH HAZELNUT, SMALL MACADAMIA MACCHIATO WITH LAVENDER, SMALL MACADAMIA MACCHIATO WITH ROSE WATERS, SMALL MACADAMIA MACCHIATO WITH HONEY, SMALL MACADAMIA MACCHIATO WITH CARDAMOM, SMALL MACADAMIA MACCHIATO WITH CINNAMON, SMALL MACADAMIA MACCHIATO WITH MASALA, SMALL MACADAMIA MACCHIATO WITH TUMERIC GINGER, SMALL MACADAMIA MACCHIATO WITH CHAGA, SMALL MACADAMIA MACCHIATO WITH PUMPKIN SPICE, SMALL MACADAMIA FRAPPE , SMALL MACADAMIA FRAPPE WITH VANILLA, SMALL MACADAMIA FRAPPE WITH CARAMEL, SMALL MACADAMIA FRAPPE WITH CHAI, SMALL MACADAMIA FRAPPE WITH CHOCOLATE, SMALL MACADAMIA FRAPPE WITH HAZELNUT, SMALL MACADAMIA FRAPPE WITH LAVENDER, SMALL MACADAMIA FRAPPE WITH ROSE WATERS, SMALL MACADAMIA FRAPPE WITH HONEY, SMALL MACADAMIA FRAPPE WITH CARDAMOM, SMALL MACADAMIA FRAPPE WITH CINNAMON, SMALL MACADAMIA FRAPPE WITH MASALA, SMALL MACADAMIA FRAPPE WITH TUMERIC GINGER, SMALL MACADAMIA FRAPPE WITH CHAGA, SMALL MACADAMIA FRAPPE WITH PUMPKIN SPICE, SMALL MACADAMIA AMERICANO , SMALL MACADAMIA AMERICANO WITH VANILLA, SMALL MACADAMIA AMERICANO WITH CARAMEL, SMALL MACADAMIA AMERICANO WITH CHAI, SMALL MACADAMIA AMERICANO WITH CHOCOLATE, SMALL MACADAMIA AMERICANO WITH HAZELNUT, SMALL MACADAMIA AMERICANO WITH LAVENDER, SMALL MACADAMIA AMERICANO WITH ROSE WATERS, SMALL MACADAMIA AMERICANO WITH HONEY, SMALL MACADAMIA AMERICANO WITH CARDAMOM, SMALL MACADAMIA AMERICANO WITH CINNAMON, SMALL MACADAMIA AMERICANO WITH MASALA, SMALL MACADAMIA AMERICANO WITH TUMERIC GINGER, SMALL MACADAMIA AMERICANO WITH CHAGA, SMALL MACADAMIA AMERICANO WITH PUMPKIN SPICE, SMALL MACADAMIA FLAT WHITE , SMALL MACADAMIA FLAT WHITE WITH VANILLA, SMALL MACADAMIA FLAT WHITE WITH CARAMEL, SMALL MACADAMIA FLAT WHITE WITH CHAI, SMALL MACADAMIA FLAT WHITE WITH CHOCOLATE, SMALL MACADAMIA FLAT WHITE WITH HAZELNUT, SMALL MACADAMIA FLAT WHITE WITH LAVENDER, SMALL MACADAMIA FLAT WHITE WITH ROSE WATERS, SMALL MACADAMIA FLAT WHITE WITH HONEY, SMALL MACADAMIA FLAT WHITE WITH CARDAMOM, SMALL MACADAMIA FLAT WHITE WITH CINNAMON, SMALL MACADAMIA FLAT WHITE WITH MASALA, SMALL MACADAMIA FLAT WHITE WITH TUMERIC GINGER, SMALL MACADAMIA FLAT WHITE WITH CHAGA, SMALL MACADAMIA FLAT WHITE WITH PUMPKIN SPICE, SMALL COCONUT COLD BREW , SMALL COCONUT COLD BREW WITH VANILLA, SMALL COCONUT COLD BREW WITH CARAMEL, SMALL COCONUT COLD BREW WITH CHAI, SMALL COCONUT COLD BREW WITH CHOCOLATE, SMALL COCONUT COLD BREW WITH HAZELNUT, SMALL COCONUT COLD BREW WITH LAVENDER, SMALL COCONUT COLD BREW WITH ROSE WATERS, SMALL COCONUT COLD BREW WITH HONEY, SMALL COCONUT COLD BREW WITH CARDAMOM, SMALL COCONUT COLD BREW WITH CINNAMON, SMALL COCONUT COLD BREW WITH MASALA, SMALL COCONUT COLD BREW WITH TUMERIC GINGER, SMALL COCONUT COLD BREW WITH CHAGA, SMALL COCONUT COLD BREW WITH PUMPKIN SPICE, SMALL COCONUT CAPPUCCINO , SMALL COCONUT CAPPUCCINO WITH VANILLA, SMALL COCONUT CAPPUCCINO WITH CARAMEL, SMALL COCONUT CAPPUCCINO WITH CHAI, SMALL COCONUT CAPPUCCINO WITH CHOCOLATE, SMALL COCONUT CAPPUCCINO WITH HAZELNUT, SMALL COCONUT CAPPUCCINO WITH LAVENDER, SMALL COCONUT CAPPUCCINO WITH ROSE WATERS, SMALL COCONUT CAPPUCCINO WITH HONEY, SMALL COCONUT CAPPUCCINO WITH CARDAMOM, SMALL COCONUT CAPPUCCINO WITH CINNAMON, SMALL COCONUT CAPPUCCINO WITH MASALA, SMALL COCONUT CAPPUCCINO WITH TUMERIC GINGER, SMALL COCONUT CAPPUCCINO WITH CHAGA, SMALL COCONUT CAPPUCCINO WITH PUMPKIN SPICE, SMALL COCONUT MOCHA , SMALL COCONUT MOCHA WITH VANILLA, SMALL COCONUT MOCHA WITH CARAMEL, SMALL COCONUT MOCHA WITH CHAI, SMALL COCONUT MOCHA WITH CHOCOLATE, SMALL COCONUT MOCHA WITH HAZELNUT, SMALL COCONUT MOCHA WITH LAVENDER, SMALL COCONUT MOCHA WITH ROSE WATERS, SMALL COCONUT MOCHA WITH HONEY, SMALL COCONUT MOCHA WITH CARDAMOM, SMALL COCONUT MOCHA WITH CINNAMON, SMALL COCONUT MOCHA WITH MASALA, SMALL COCONUT MOCHA WITH TUMERIC GINGER, SMALL COCONUT MOCHA WITH CHAGA, SMALL COCONUT MOCHA WITH PUMPKIN SPICE, SMALL COCONUT LATTE , SMALL COCONUT LATTE WITH VANILLA, SMALL COCONUT LATTE WITH CARAMEL, SMALL COCONUT LATTE WITH CHAI, SMALL COCONUT LATTE WITH CHOCOLATE, SMALL COCONUT LATTE WITH HAZELNUT, SMALL COCONUT LATTE WITH LAVENDER, SMALL COCONUT LATTE WITH ROSE WATERS, SMALL COCONUT LATTE WITH HONEY, SMALL COCONUT LATTE WITH CARDAMOM, SMALL COCONUT LATTE WITH CINNAMON, SMALL COCONUT LATTE WITH MASALA, SMALL COCONUT LATTE WITH TUMERIC GINGER, SMALL COCONUT LATTE WITH CHAGA, SMALL COCONUT LATTE WITH PUMPKIN SPICE, SMALL COCONUT MACCHIATO , SMALL COCONUT MACCHIATO WITH VANILLA, SMALL COCONUT MACCHIATO WITH CARAMEL, SMALL COCONUT MACCHIATO WITH CHAI, SMALL COCONUT MACCHIATO WITH CHOCOLATE, SMALL COCONUT MACCHIATO WITH HAZELNUT, SMALL COCONUT MACCHIATO WITH LAVENDER, SMALL COCONUT MACCHIATO WITH ROSE WATERS, SMALL COCONUT MACCHIATO WITH HONEY, SMALL COCONUT MACCHIATO WITH CARDAMOM, SMALL COCONUT MACCHIATO WITH CINNAMON, SMALL COCONUT MACCHIATO WITH MASALA, SMALL COCONUT MACCHIATO WITH TUMERIC GINGER, SMALL COCONUT MACCHIATO WITH CHAGA, SMALL COCONUT MACCHIATO WITH PUMPKIN SPICE, SMALL COCONUT FRAPPE , SMALL COCONUT FRAPPE WITH VANILLA, SMALL COCONUT FRAPPE WITH CARAMEL, SMALL COCONUT FRAPPE WITH CHAI, SMALL COCONUT FRAPPE WITH CHOCOLATE, SMALL COCONUT FRAPPE WITH HAZELNUT, SMALL COCONUT FRAPPE WITH LAVENDER, SMALL COCONUT FRAPPE WITH ROSE WATERS, SMALL COCONUT FRAPPE WITH HONEY, SMALL COCONUT FRAPPE WITH CARDAMOM, SMALL COCONUT FRAPPE WITH CINNAMON, SMALL COCONUT FRAPPE WITH MASALA, SMALL COCONUT FRAPPE WITH TUMERIC GINGER, SMALL COCONUT FRAPPE WITH CHAGA, SMALL COCONUT FRAPPE WITH PUMPKIN SPICE, SMALL COCONUT AMERICANO , SMALL COCONUT AMERICANO WITH VANILLA, SMALL COCONUT AMERICANO WITH CARAMEL, SMALL COCONUT AMERICANO WITH CHAI, SMALL COCONUT AMERICANO WITH CHOCOLATE, SMALL COCONUT AMERICANO WITH HAZELNUT, SMALL COCONUT AMERICANO WITH LAVENDER, SMALL COCONUT AMERICANO WITH ROSE WATERS, SMALL COCONUT AMERICANO WITH HONEY, SMALL COCONUT AMERICANO WITH CARDAMOM, SMALL COCONUT AMERICANO WITH CINNAMON, SMALL COCONUT AMERICANO WITH MASALA, SMALL COCONUT AMERICANO WITH TUMERIC GINGER, SMALL COCONUT AMERICANO WITH CHAGA, SMALL COCONUT AMERICANO WITH PUMPKIN SPICE, SMALL COCONUT FLAT WHITE , SMALL COCONUT FLAT WHITE WITH VANILLA, SMALL COCONUT FLAT WHITE WITH CARAMEL, SMALL COCONUT FLAT WHITE WITH CHAI, SMALL COCONUT FLAT WHITE WITH CHOCOLATE, SMALL COCONUT FLAT WHITE WITH HAZELNUT, SMALL COCONUT FLAT WHITE WITH LAVENDER, SMALL COCONUT FLAT WHITE WITH ROSE WATERS, SMALL COCONUT FLAT WHITE WITH HONEY, SMALL COCONUT FLAT WHITE WITH CARDAMOM, SMALL COCONUT FLAT WHITE WITH CINNAMON, SMALL COCONUT FLAT WHITE WITH MASALA, SMALL COCONUT FLAT WHITE WITH TUMERIC GINGER, SMALL COCONUT FLAT WHITE WITH CHAGA, SMALL COCONUT FLAT WHITE WITH PUMPKIN SPICE, SMALL PISTACHIO COLD BREW , SMALL PISTACHIO COLD BREW WITH VANILLA, SMALL PISTACHIO COLD BREW WITH CARAMEL, SMALL PISTACHIO COLD BREW WITH CHAI, SMALL COLD BREW.

And yet, 257 million women worldwide can’t even choose to use contraception.
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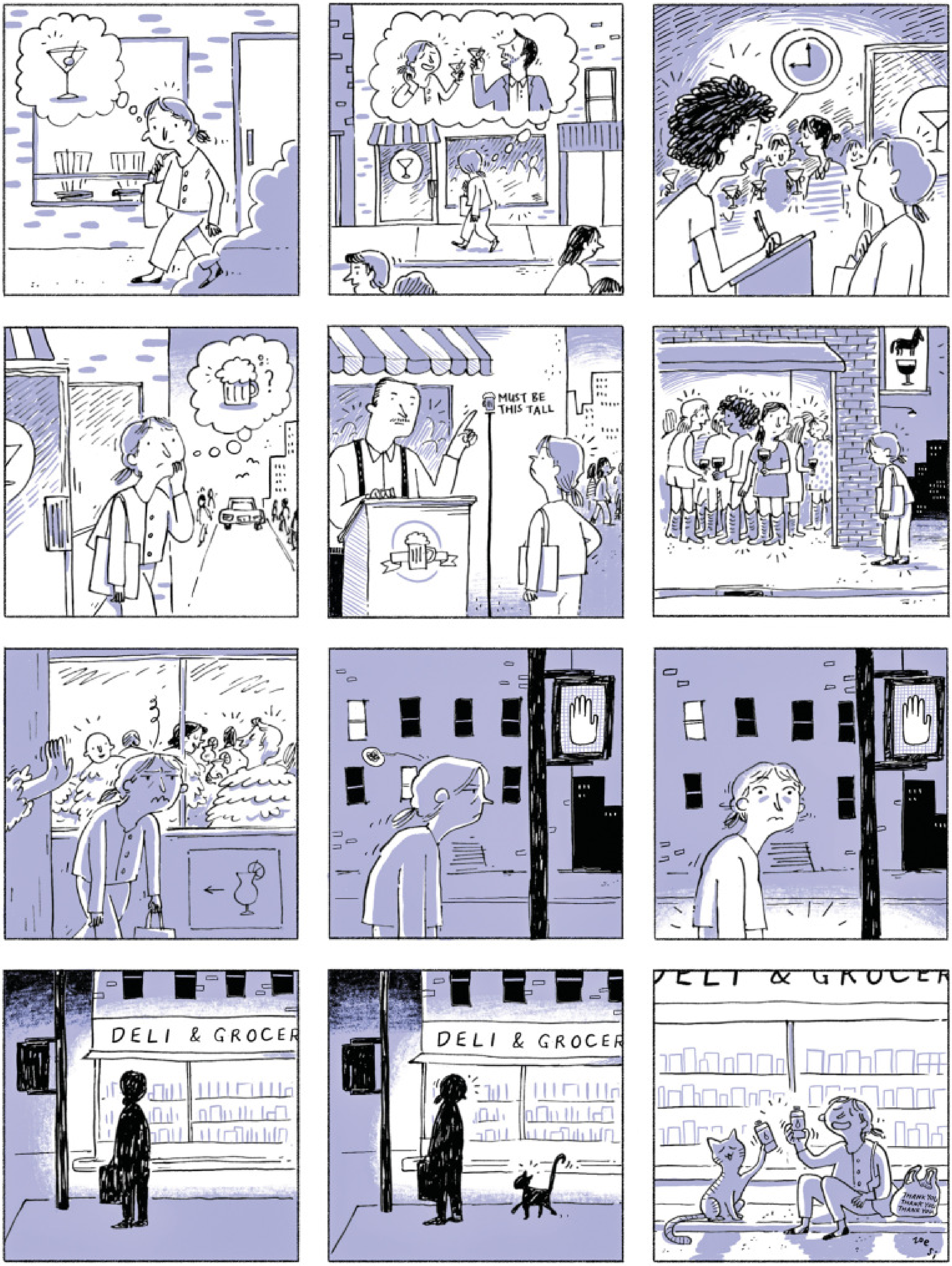
UNITED STATES

HAPPY HOUR BY ZOE SI


MUST BE THIS TALL
DELI & GROCER
DELI & GROCER
DELI & GROCER
THANK YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU
zoe si

THE NEW YORKER

The 2024 Desk Diary

Remember your takeoffs and landings and all your thoughts in between.

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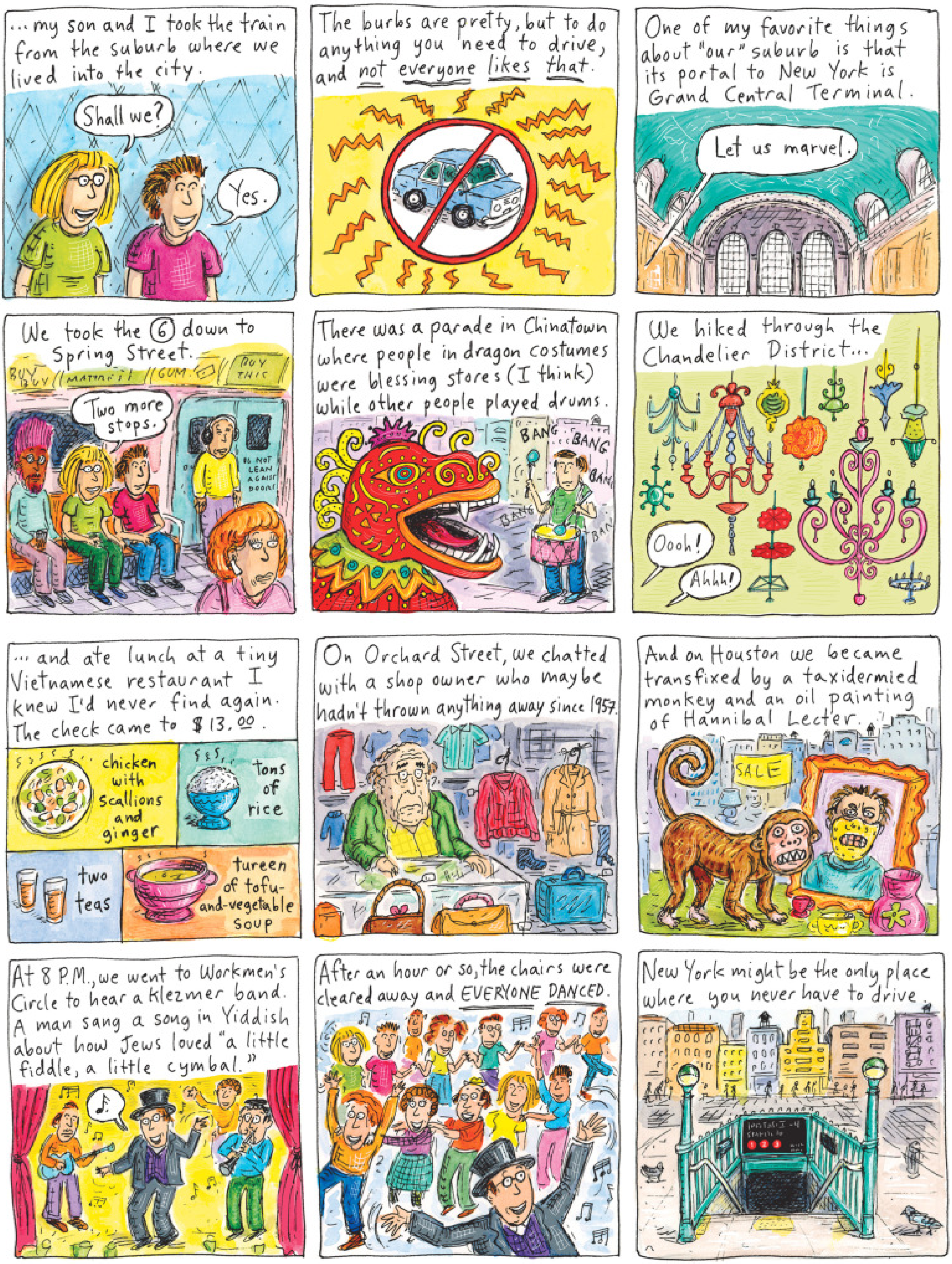
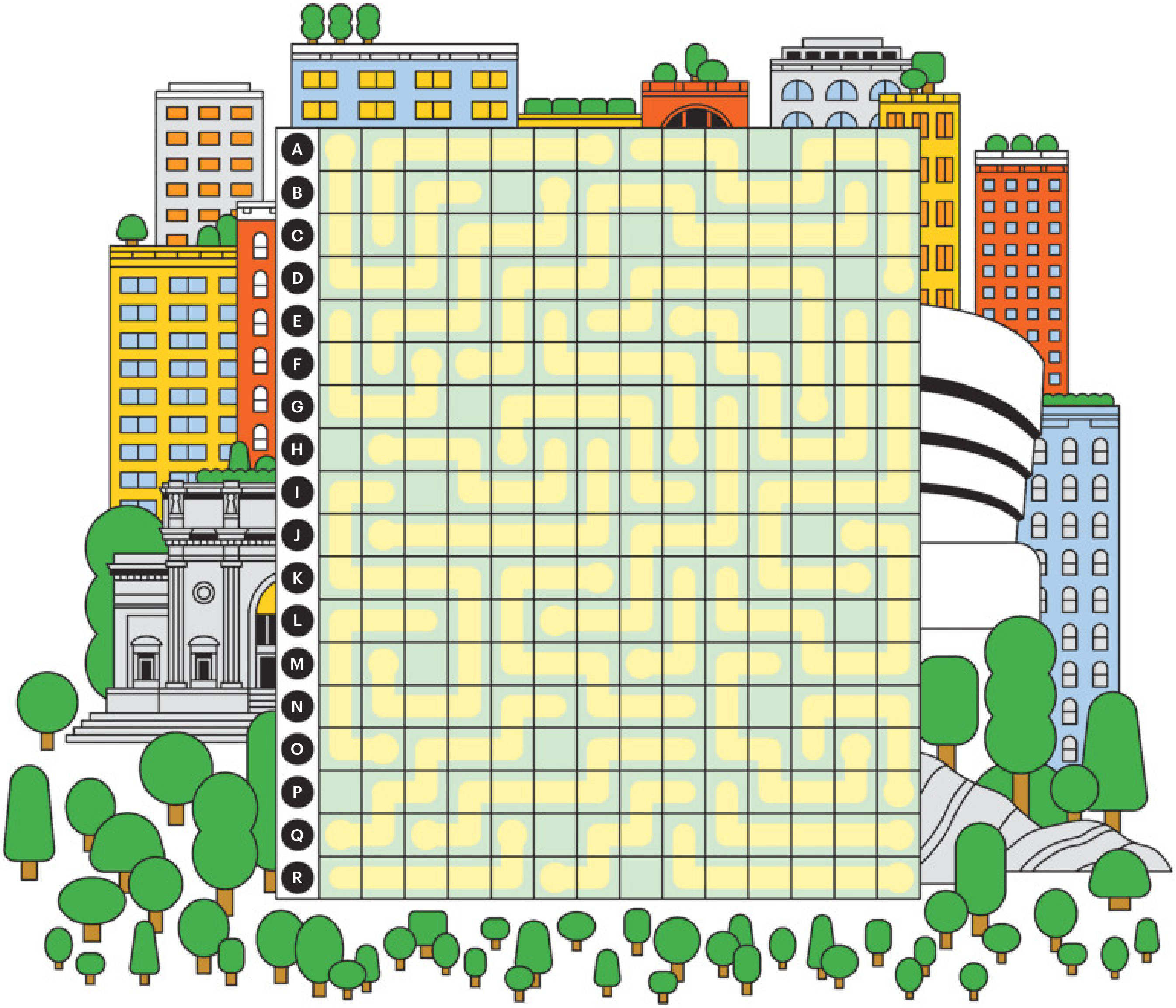
NOT FOREVER AGO BY ROZ CHAST


...my son and I took the train from the suburb where we lived into the city.
Shall we?
Yes.
The burbs are pretty, but to do anything you need to drive, and not everyone likes that.
One of my favorite things about "our" suburb is that its portal to New York is Grand Central Terminal.
Let us marvel.
We took the ⑥ down to Spring Street.
BUY
BUY
MATTRESS
GUM
BUY THIS
Two more stops.
DO NOT LEAN AGAINST DOORS
There was a parade in Chinatown where people in dragon costumes were blessing stores (I think) while other people played drums.
BANG
BANG
BANG
BANG
BANG
We hiked through the Chandelier District...
Oooh!
Ahhh!
...and ate lunch at a tiny Vietnamese restaurant I knew I'd never find again. The check came to $13.00.
chicken with scallions and ginger
tons of rice
two teas
tureen of tofu-and-vegetable soup
On Orchard Street, we chatted with a shop owner who maybe hadn't thrown anything away since 1957.
And on Houston we became transfixed by a taxidermied monkey and an oil painting of Hannibal Lecter.
SALE
At 8 P.M., we went to Workmen's Circle to hear a klezmer band. A man sang a song in Yiddish about how Jews loved "a little fiddle, a little cymbal."
After an hour or so, the chairs were cleared away and EVERYONE DANCED.
New York might be the only place where you never have to drive.

R. Chast

LOST IN CENTRAL PARK

BY PATRICK BERRY



You took a wrong turn in the Ramble, and now you're caught in a labyrinth of twisting paths, cursing the name of Frederick Law Olmsted. Solve the puzzle to get your bearings—and to reveal the caption to the cartoon on the opposite page.

Answers fit into the grid in two ways: Rows and Paths. Each Row contains two answers, side by side, which span the width of the grid and are clued in order. Each Path answer will begin in one of the yellow circles and follow that Path to its end. The length of each Path answer is noted after its clue; this will help you determine which answer goes with which Path. When the grid is filled, the sixteen letters that are not part of a Path will spell out the missing caption.

ROWS

A Improvises a vocal
Deeply exhausted: Hyph.

B Earmarks
Herb that flavors béarnaise sauce

C First President of Russia
"The Great ___" (1979 drama starring Robert Duvall)

D Lustrous veneer
Dairy brand named for a county in Oregon

E Quaking in one's boots
Piloted, as an experimental aircraft: Hyph.

F Emily Post's specialty
Whisky ___ (historic West Hollywood night club): 3 wds.

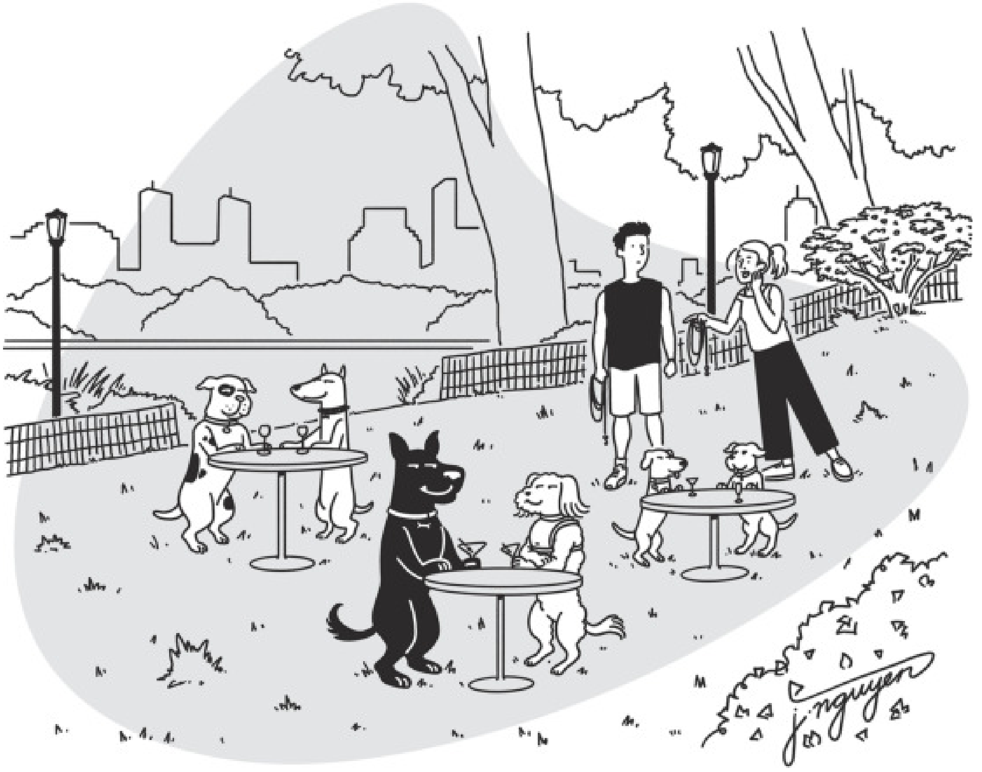
G Seek, as a political office: 2 wds.
Foam-rubber item on a desktop: 2 wds.

ILLUSTRATION BY ROSE WONG

H “Mutiny on the Bounty” actor Charles
Public’s desire for a given commodity
I 2023 Pixar film with the characters Ember Lumen and Wade Ripple
Starting point for three protest marches in 1965
J Leonard’s roommate on “The Big Bang Theory”
Change the form of
K Divide
“Don’t upset the ___”
L Comic such as “Akira” or “Death Note”
Get less secure, as a bolt: 2 wds.
M Embarrassed by one’s own behavior
Person with a lot to show you?
N Electrifying
Group that might contain grouper
O Estevez of the Brat Pack
Emblem
P Stock-market boost
Lists maintained by employers
Q Mend, as antique furniture
Boll ___ (crop-destroying beetles)
R Spanish setting of a Rossini opera
Marathoner’s asset

PATHS

- Walk dizzily (4)
- Habituates (6)
- Small, sharp piece (6)
- They’re chopped to make tapenade (6)
- Watering hole of the Old West (6)
- Wiggle room (6)
- Add to (7)
- Classic video-game character with a metallic blue suit (4,3)
- Give life to (7)
- Sang with a partner (7)
- ___ course (boot-camp feature) (8)
- Didn’t throw away (4,2,2)
- Related to estrogen or testosterone, say (8)
- 1992 Whoopi Goldberg film set in a convent (6,3)
- Decorative ascot fasteners (9)
- Introduces oneself (4,5)
- Like the DC Comics characters Copperhead and Killer Croc (9)
- Word Spock might use to describe McCoy’s reasoning (9)
- Cloths applied to feverish foreheads (10)
- Hammer wielded by a mounted athlete (4,6)
- Some ambulance personnel (10)
- Actor tied with Glenn Close for the most Oscar nominations with no resulting wins (5,6)
- Orchestrate from behind the scenes (5-6)
- First openly gay anchor of a prime-time news program (6,6)
- What the “K” stands for in K-12 (12)
- Ship that seeks out wrecks (7,6)
- Hollywood auteur who directed the fifth-season finale of “CSI” (7,9)

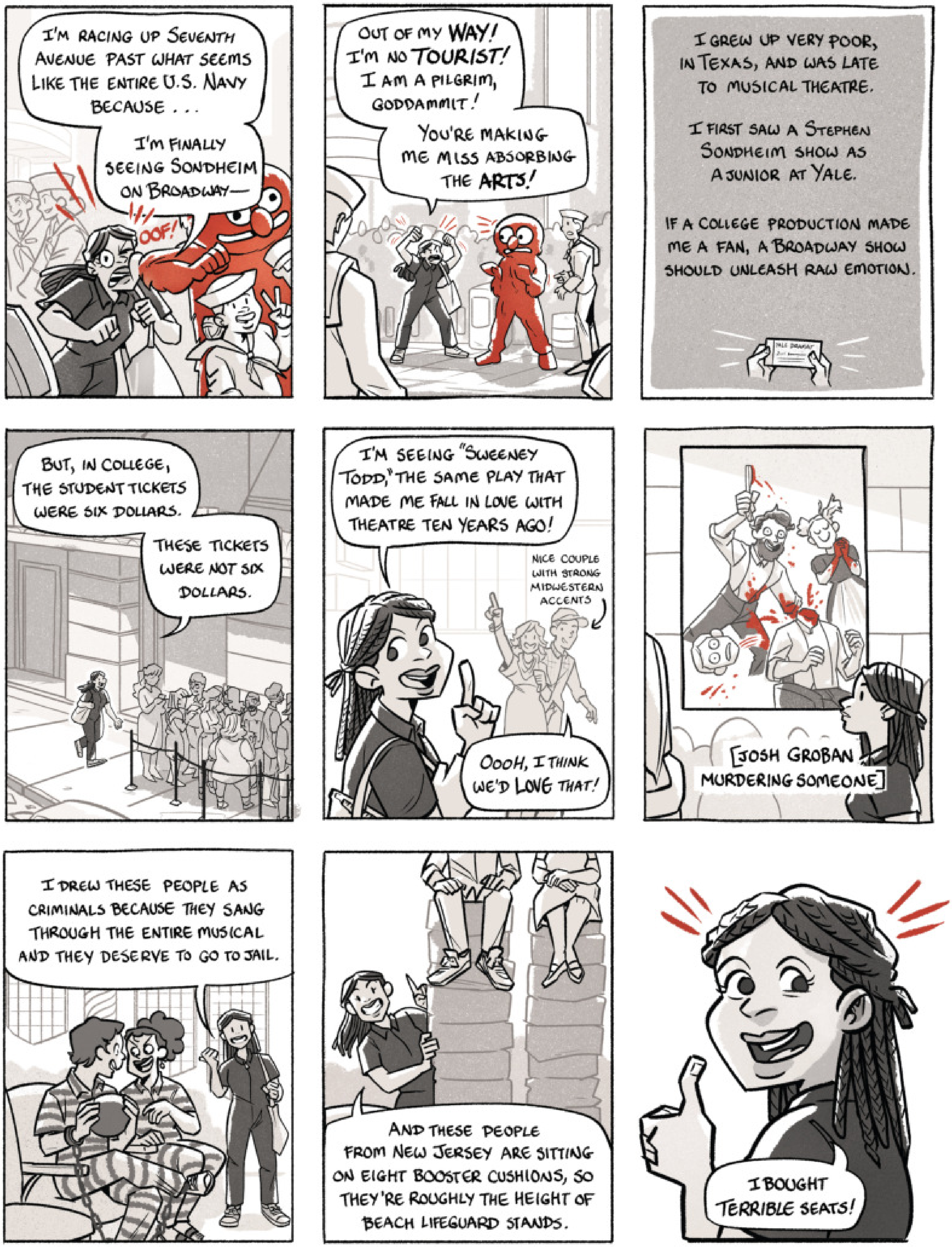


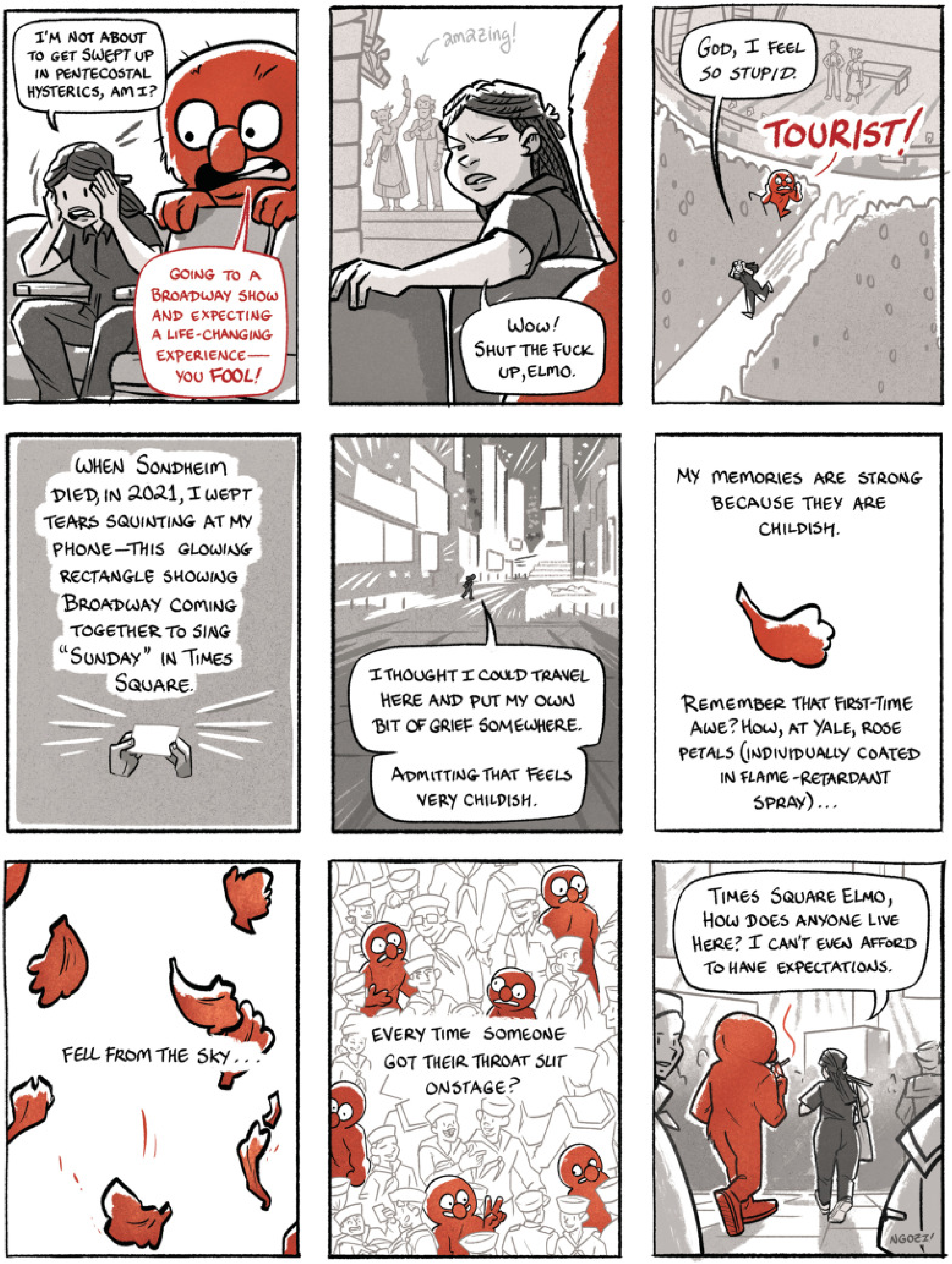
“ ”

CARTOON BY JEREMY NGUYEN

SUNDAY IN TIMES SQUARE

BY NGOZI UKAZU

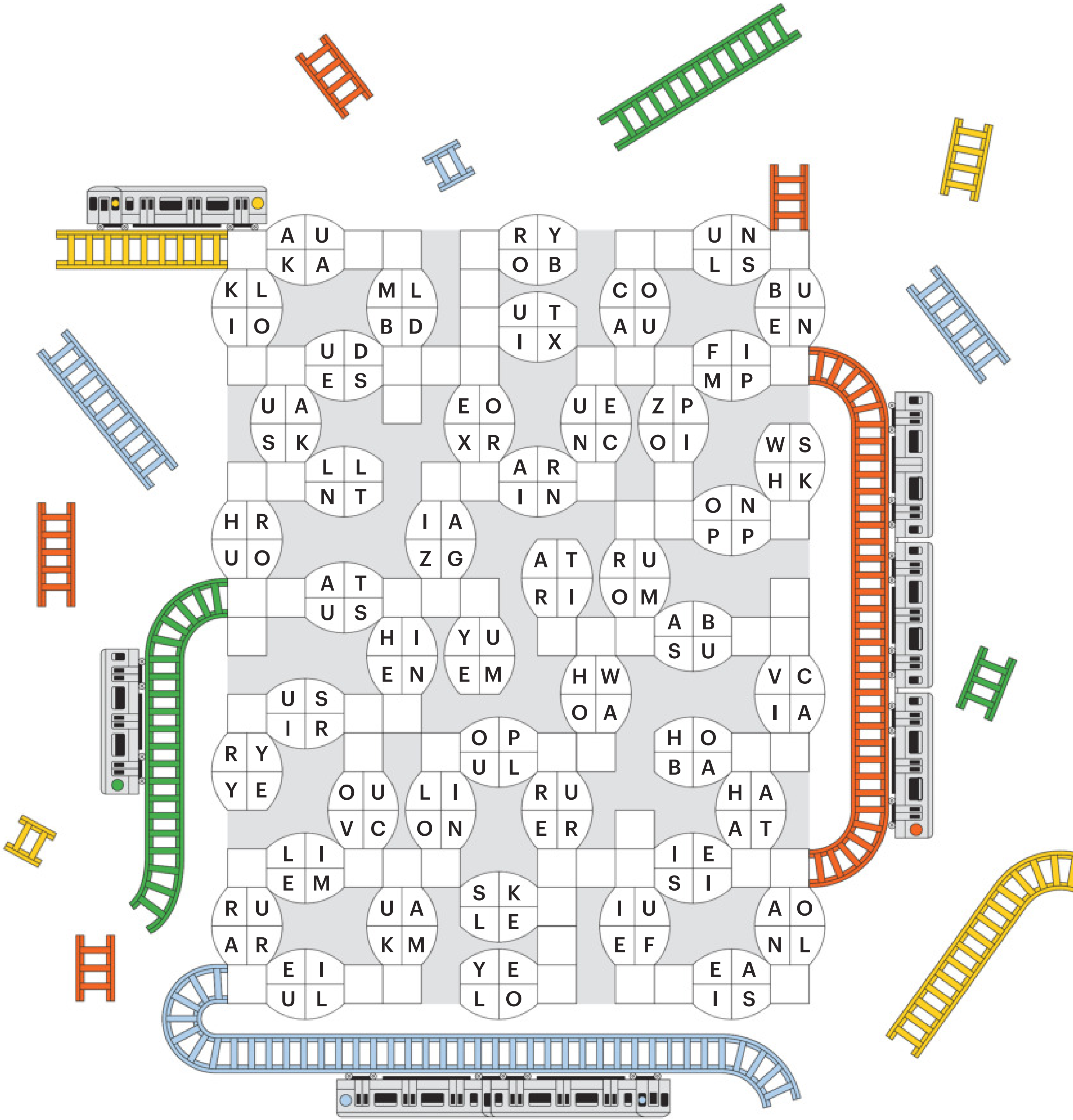

I'M RACING UP SEVENTH AVENUE PAST WHAT SEEMS LIKE THE ENTIRE U.S. NAVY BECAUSE . . .
I'M FINALLY SEEING SONDHEIM ON BROADWAY—
OOF!
OUT OF MY WAY! I'M NO TOURIST! I AM A PILGRIM, GODDAMMIT!
YOU'RE MAKING ME MISS ABSORBING THE ARTS!
I GREW UP VERY POOR, IN TEXAS, AND WAS LATE TO MUSICAL THEATRE.
I FIRST SAW A STEPHEN SONDHEIM SHOW AS A JUNIOR AT YALE.
IF A COLLEGE PRODUCTION MADE ME A FAN, A BROADWAY SHOW SHOULD UNLEASH RAW EMOTION.
BUT, IN COLLEGE, THE STUDENT TICKETS WERE SIX DOLLARS.
THESE TICKETS WERE NOT SIX DOLLARS.
I'M SEEING "SWEENEY TODD," THE SAME PLAY THAT MADE ME FALL IN LOVE WITH THEATRE TEN YEARS AGO!
NICE COUPLE WITH STRONG MIDWESTERN ACCENTS
OOOH, I THINK WE'D LOVE THAT!
[JOSH GROBAN MURDERING SOMEONE]
I DREW THESE PEOPLE AS CRIMINALS BECAUSE THEY SANG THROUGH THE ENTIRE MUSICAL AND THEY DESERVE TO GO TO JAIL.
AND THESE PEOPLE FROM NEW JERSEY ARE SITTING ON EIGHT BOOSTER CUSHIONS, SO THEY'RE ROUGHLY THE HEIGHT OF BEACH LIFEGUARD STANDS.
I BOUGHT TERRIBLE SEATS!


I'M NOT ABOUT TO GET SWEPT UP IN PENTECOSTAL HYSTERICS, AM I?
GOING TO A BROADWAY SHOW AND EXPECTING A LIFE-CHANGING EXPERIENCE— YOU FOOL!
amazing!
WOW! SHUT THE FUCK UP, ELMO.
GOD, I FEEL SO STUPID.
TOURIST!
WHEN SONDHEIM DIED, IN 2021, I WEPT TEARS SQUINTING AT MY PHONE—THIS GLOWING RECTANGLE SHOWING BROADWAY COMING TOGETHER TO SING "SUNDAY" IN TIMES SQUARE.
I THOUGHT I COULD TRAVEL HERE AND PUT MY OWN BIT OF GRIEF SOMEWHERE.
ADMITTING THAT FEELS VERY CHILDISH.
MY MEMORIES ARE STRONG BECAUSE THEY ARE CHILDISH.
REMEMBER THAT FIRST-TIME AWE? HOW, AT YALE, ROSE PETALS (INDIVIDUALLY COATED IN FLAME-RETARDANT SPRAY)...
FELL FROM THE SKY...
EVERY TIME SOMEONE GOT THEIR THROAT SLIT ONSTAGE?
TIMES SQUARE ELMO, HOW DOES ANYONE LIVE HERE? I CAN'T EVEN AFFORD TO HAVE EXPECTATIONS.
NGOZI!

TRACK MAINTENANCE

BY FRED PISCOP

The M.T.A. is behind on its construction schedule and needs your help laying new subway tracks.


A U
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M L
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C O
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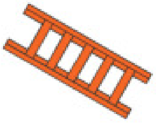
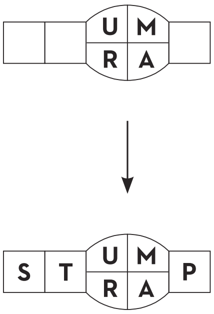
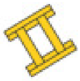
ILLUSTRATION BY ROSE WONG



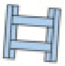
On each of the tracks in the grid on the opposite page, running across and down, two pairs of letters are provided to get you started. Fill in the missing letters so that each track spells out two words, which differ only by the provided letter pairs.

Example:





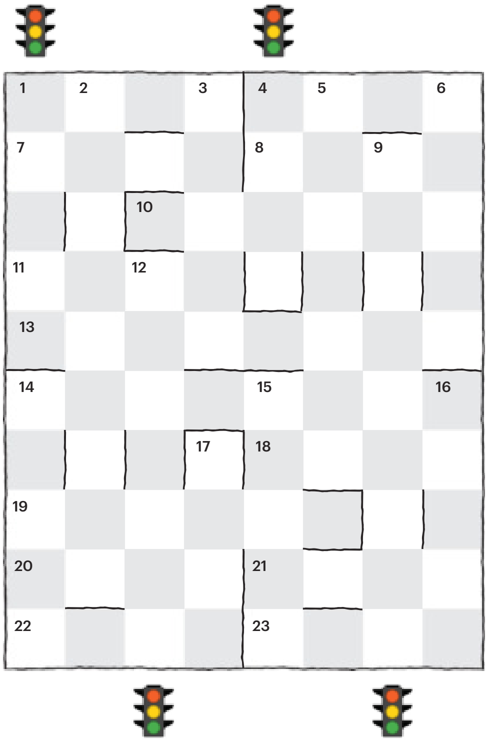
Every word in the puzzle will be a common, lowercase vocabulary word. (In the example above, the blank spaces on the track are filled in with the letters S, T, and P, to create the words STUMP and STRAP.) There may be multiple ways to fill in a given track, but only one option will make the entire subway system run smoothly.



CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

BY NEVILLE FOGARTY AND LILY GELLER

Uptown, downtown.



ACROSS

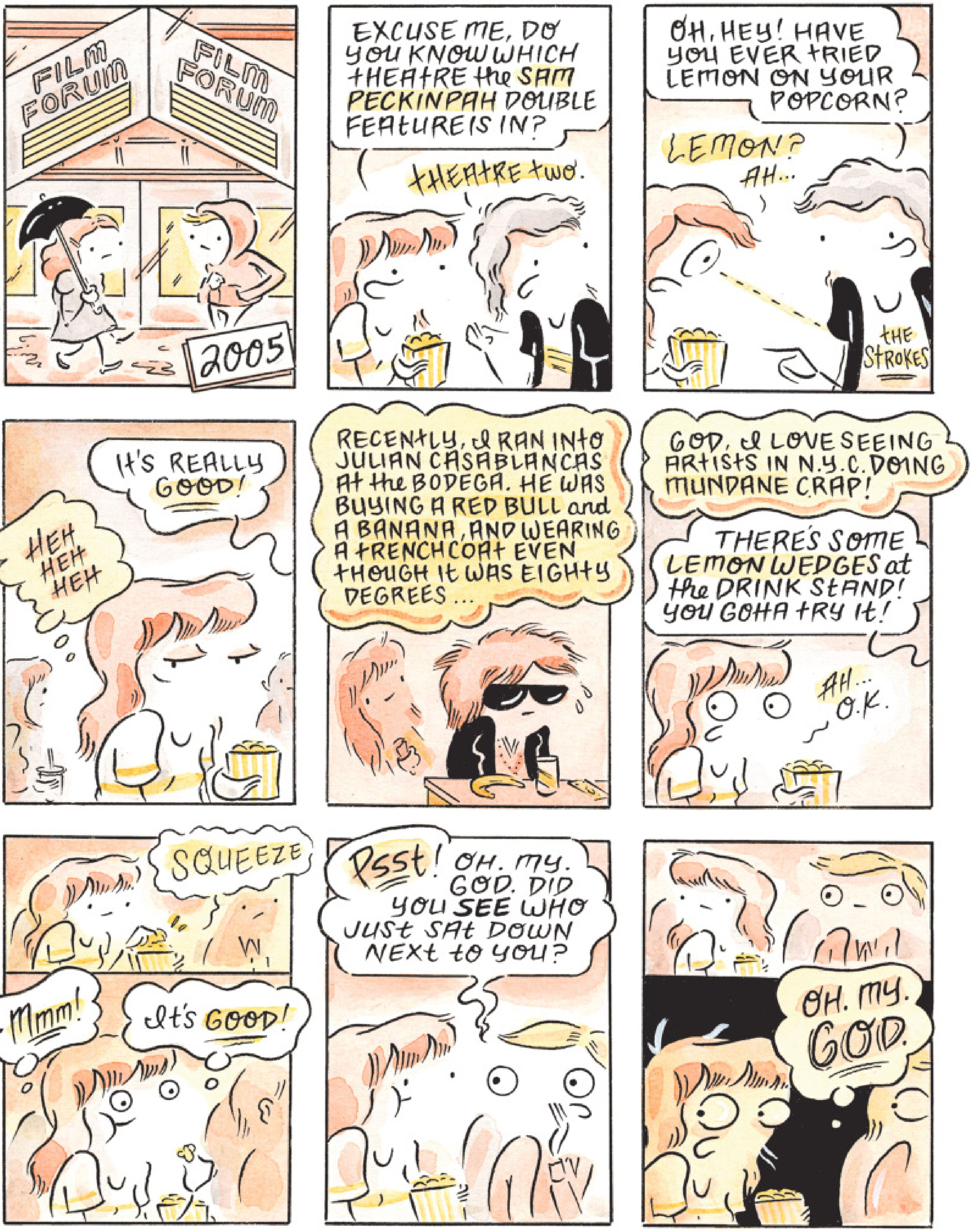
1 Bad form not to . . . (4)
4 . . . criticize head of government for feeling of anguish (4)
7 No odds of DiMaggio being a villain (4)
8 Son of Woody Harrelson seen regularly (4)
10 Heard pained howl: "This dessert is cold!" (6)
11 Magazine back issue (4)
13 Ride PATH all over the place for mentally stimulating experience (4,4)
14 Début of organ grinder playing arrangement (8)
18 Bikram or vinyasa retreats in Nagoya (4)
19 Make a math error as I'm inverting 500 + 500 (6)
20 A male cat bit (4)
21 Business-school class, in short, is online scam? (4)
22 Number of Yankees on the field contributing to reduction in E.R.A. (4)
23 Tore up lease (4)

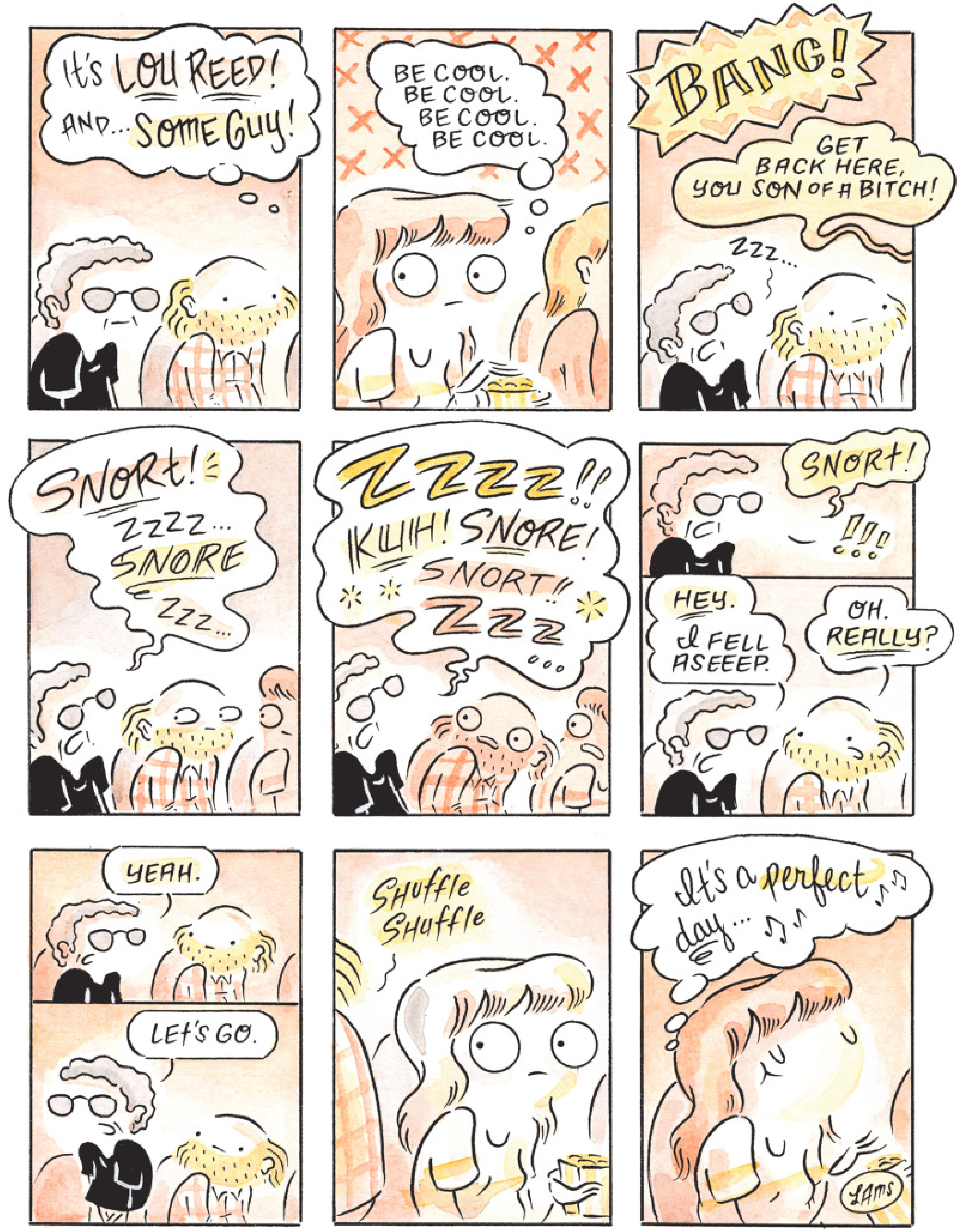
DOWN

1 Actor Colin trades last of beer for full amount of whiskey (5)
2 A trip wire damaged property of the Algonquin Round Table (6,3)
3 At the recital, tenor sounded like a cow (5)
4 Stop average Knicks starter (4)
5 Harbor trios unboxed some rice (7)
6 Rose, put off guard at first, backtracks (3,2)
9 Kentucky city permit allows crossing through fitness centers (9)
12 Father of the Constitution revolutionized domains (7)
14 Darn hot in Oman (2,3)
15 Actress Winona refurbished dryer (5)
16 Avenger's beginning to load gun before introduction of Tony Stark (5)
17 Celebrity right out of frame (4)

For help solving cryptic crosswords, visit **newyorker.com/cryptic-guide**

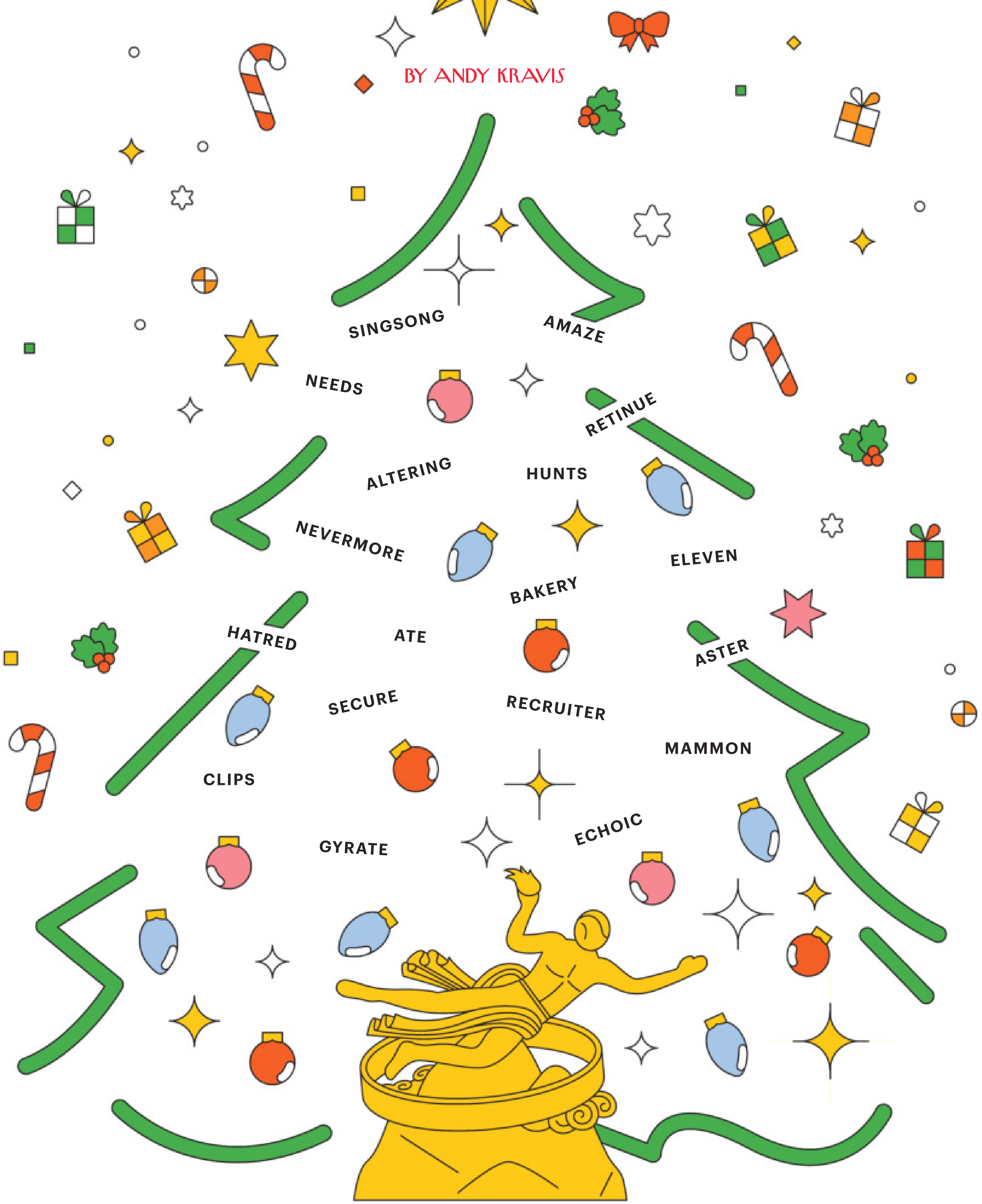
SPENT IT WITH LOU BY LESLIE STEIN


FILM FORUM
FILM FORUM
2005
EXCUSE ME, DO YOU KNOW WHICH THEATRE THE SAM PECKINPAH DOUBLE FEATURE IS IN?
THEATRE TWO.
OH, HEY! HAVE YOU EVER TRIED LEMON ON YOUR POPCORN?
LEMON? AH...
THE STROKES
IT'S REALLY GOOD!
HEH HEH HEH
RECENTLY, I RAN INTO JULIAN CASABLANCAS AT THE BODEGA. HE WAS BUYING A RED BULL AND A BANANA, AND WEARING A TRENCHCOAT EVEN THOUGH IT WAS EIGHTY DEGREES...
GOD, I LOVE SEEING ARTISTS IN N.Y.C. DOING MUNDANE CRAP!
THERE'S SOME LEMON WEDGES AT THE DRINK STAND! YOU GOTTA TRY IT!
AH... O.K.
SQUEEZE
Mmm!
It's GOOD!
Psst! OH. MY. GOD. DID YOU SEE WHO JUST SAT DOWN NEXT TO YOU?
OH. MY. GOD.


It's LOU REED!
AND... SOME GUY!
BE COOL.
BE COOL.
BE COOL.
BE COOL.
BANG!
GET BACK HERE, YOU SON OF A BITCH!
ZZZ...
SNORT!
ZZZZ...
SNORE
ZZZ...
ZZZZZ!!
KUH! SNORE!
SNORT!!
ZZZ
SNORT!
!!!
HEY.
I FELL ASEEEP.
OH. REALLY?
YEAH.
LET'S GO.
SHUFFLE
SHUFFLE
It's a perfect day...
LAMS

TRIMMING THE TREE

BY ANDY KRAVIS



SINGSONG

AMAZE

NEEDS

RETINUE

ALTERING

HUNTS

NEVERMORE

ELEVEN

BAKERY

HATRED

ATE

ASTER

SECURE

RECRUITER

MAMMON

CLIPS

GYRATE

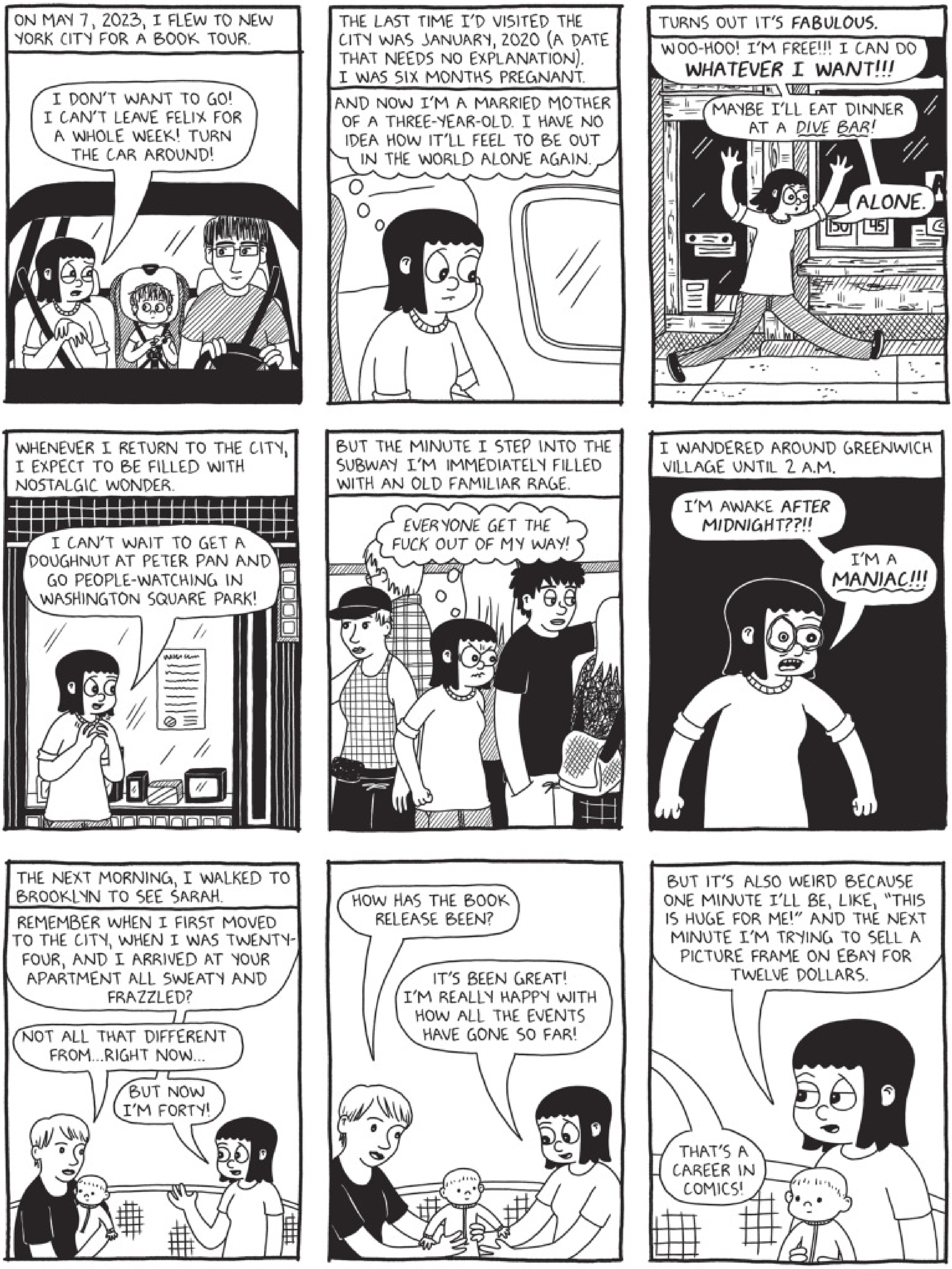
ECHOIC

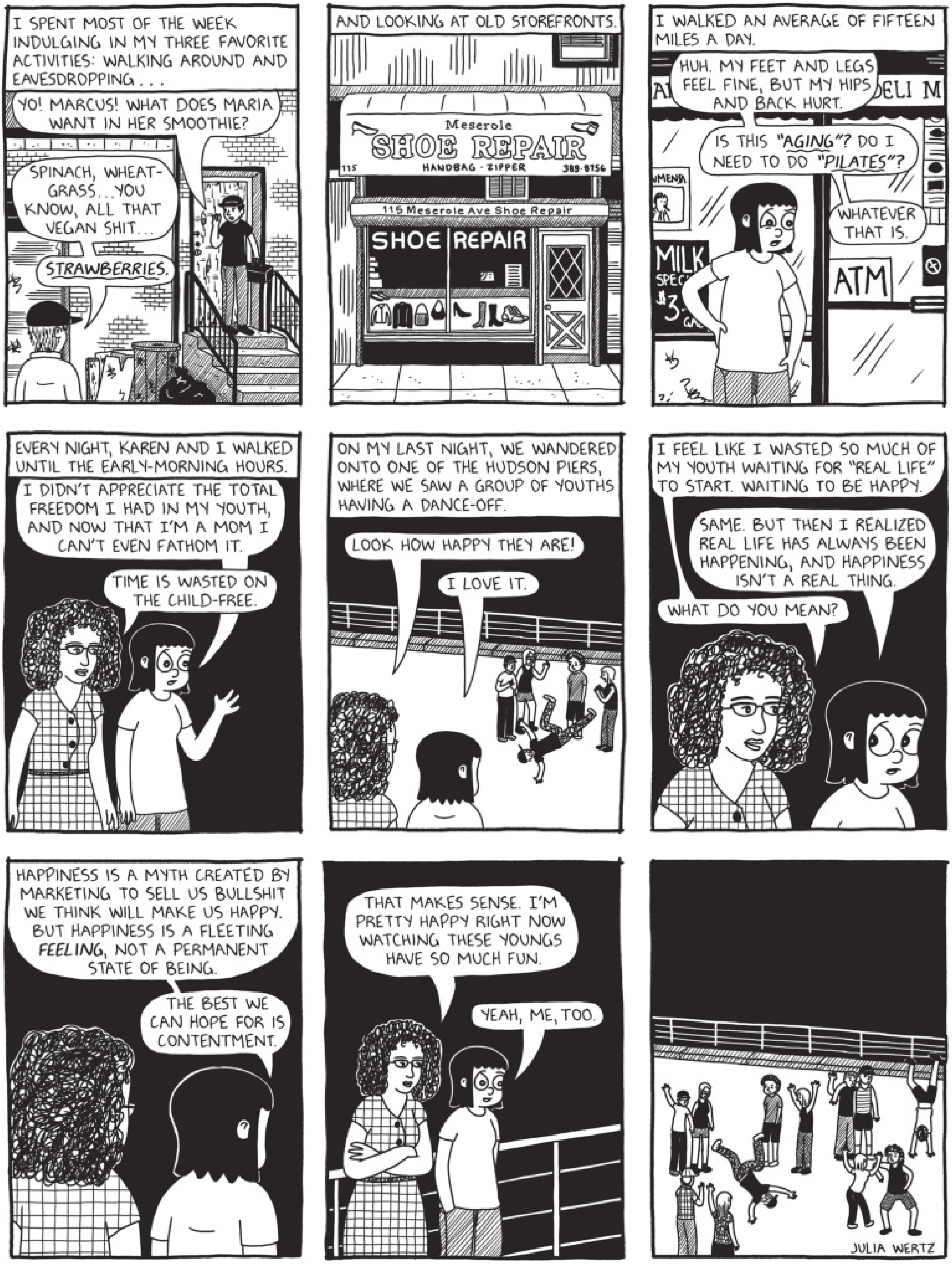
ILLUSTRATION BY ROSE WONG

This year, the holiday honchos in charge of festooning Rockefeller Center have done things a little differently. Using the prompts below, transform each of the eighteen words on the tree into a new word. Write the original word and the new word in the spaces provided; each word on the tree will be used exactly once. When you're done, the first letters of the answers in each column, read from top to bottom, will spell out two sentences that explain why a bank employee was hired to decorate the tree.

TAKE A WORD ON THE TREE AND . . .	A. WORD ON THE TREE	B. NEW WORD
1 Swap the first and fifth letters to make a word used in a courtroom.		
2 Come up with a rhyming word that begins many stories.		
3 Move the first letter to the end to make a new six-letter word.		
4 Change two letters to "K"s and add a space to make a classic movie character.		
5 Add a one-letter compass point (N, E, S, or W) to the beginning and a different one to the end to make a word related to a cardinal direction.		
6 Shift the first letter four spaces later in the alphabet (for example, "A" becomes "E") to make a synonym for "deceit."		
7 Delete every other letter to make a word seen on a U.S. map.		
8 Add a letter to the beginning to make a kind of class named after a Frenchman.		
9 Change the first letter to make one of the ten most populous cities in the United Kingdom.		
10 Add the same letter to the beginning and the end to make an event that will occur in April, 2024.		
11 Remove something you wear to make a color.		
12 Change two letters to "S"s to make an Old Testament figure.		
13 Come up with a homophone that's two letters longer.		
14 Replace the title of a Taylor Swift album with a long period of time to make an element on the periodic table.		
15 Anagram the letters to make a two-dimensional shape.		
16 Change the first letter to the next letter of the alphabet and insert a "D" between the second and third letters to make a new word.		
17 Delete the first two letters to make an adjective that notably does not describe the original word.		
18 Reverse everything after the first letter to make a new word.		

RETURN TO THE CITY BY JULIA WERTZ

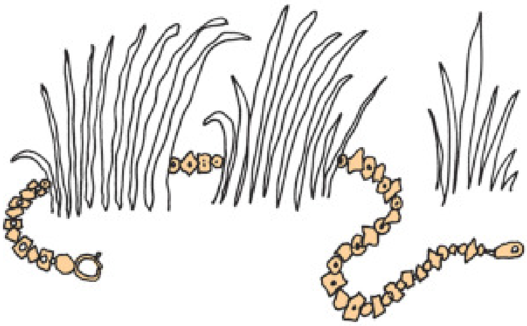

ON MAY 7, 2023, I FLEW TO NEW YORK CITY FOR A BOOK TOUR.
I DON'T WANT TO GO! I CAN'T LEAVE FELIX FOR A WHOLE WEEK! TURN THE CAR AROUND!
THE LAST TIME I'D VISITED THE CITY WAS JANUARY, 2020 (A DATE THAT NEEDS NO EXPLANATION). I WAS SIX MONTHS PREGNANT.
AND NOW I'M A MARRIED MOTHER OF A THREE-YEAR-OLD. I HAVE NO IDEA HOW IT'LL FEEL TO BE OUT IN THE WORLD ALONE AGAIN.
TURNS OUT IT'S FABULOUS.
WOO-HOO! I'M FREE!!! I CAN DO WHATEVER I WANT!!!
MAYBE I'LL EAT DINNER AT A DIVE BAR!
ALONE.
WHENEVER I RETURN TO THE CITY, I EXPECT TO BE FILLED WITH NOSTALGIC WONDER.
I CAN'T WAIT TO GET A DOUGHNUT AT PETER PAN AND GO PEOPLE-WATCHING IN WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK!
BUT THE MINUTE I STEP INTO THE SUBWAY I'M IMMEDIATELY FILLED WITH AN OLD FAMILIAR RAGE.
EVERYONE GET THE FUCK OUT OF MY WAY!
I WANDERED AROUND GREENWICH VILLAGE UNTIL 2 A.M.
I'M AWAKE AFTER MIDNIGHT??!!
I'M A MANIAC!!!
THE NEXT MORNING, I WALKED TO BROOKLYN TO SEE SARAH.
REMEMBER WHEN I FIRST MOVED TO THE CITY, WHEN I WAS TWENTY-FOUR, AND I ARRIVED AT YOUR APARTMENT ALL SWEATY AND FRAZZLED?
NOT ALL THAT DIFFERENT FROM...RIGHT NOW...
BUT NOW I'M FORTY!
HOW HAS THE BOOK RELEASE BEEN?
IT'S BEEN GREAT! I'M REALLY HAPPY WITH HOW ALL THE EVENTS HAVE GONE SO FAR!
BUT IT'S ALSO WEIRD BECAUSE ONE MINUTE I'LL BE, LIKE, "THIS IS HUGE FOR ME!" AND THE NEXT MINUTE I'M TRYING TO SELL A PICTURE FRAME ON EBAY FOR TWELVE DOLLARS.
THAT'S A CAREER IN COMICS!


I SPENT MOST OF THE WEEK INDULGING IN MY THREE FAVORITE ACTIVITIES: WALKING AROUND AND EAVESDROPPING . . .
YO! MARCUS! WHAT DOES MARIA WANT IN HER SMOOTHIE?
SPINACH, WHEAT-GRASS...YOU KNOW, ALL THAT VEGAN SHIT...
STRAWBERRIES.
AND LOOKING AT OLD STOREFRONTS.
Meserole SHOE REPAIR
HANDBAG · ZIPPER
115
389·8756
115 Meserole Ave Shoe Repair
SHOE REPAIR
I WALKED AN AVERAGE OF FIFTEEN MILES A DAY.
HUH. MY FEET AND LEGS FEEL FINE, BUT MY HIPS AND BACK HURT.
IS THIS "AGING"? DO I NEED TO DO "PILATES"?
WHATEVER THAT IS.
DELI
MILK
ATM
EVERY NIGHT, KAREN AND I WALKED UNTIL THE EARLY-MORNING HOURS.
I DIDN'T APPRECIATE THE TOTAL FREEDOM I HAD IN MY YOUTH, AND NOW THAT I'M A MOM I CAN'T EVEN FATHOM IT.
TIME IS WASTED ON THE CHILD-FREE.
ON MY LAST NIGHT, WE WANDERED ONTO ONE OF THE HUDSON PIERS, WHERE WE SAW A GROUP OF YOUTHS HAVING A DANCE-OFF.
LOOK HOW HAPPY THEY ARE!
I LOVE IT.
I FEEL LIKE I WASTED SO MUCH OF MY YOUTH WAITING FOR "REAL LIFE" TO START. WAITING TO BE HAPPY.
SAME. BUT THEN I REALIZED REAL LIFE HAS ALWAYS BEEN HAPPENING, AND HAPPINESS ISN'T A REAL THING.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
HAPPINESS IS A MYTH CREATED BY MARKETING TO SELL US BULLSHIT WE THINK WILL MAKE US HAPPY. BUT HAPPINESS IS A FLEETING FEELING, NOT A PERMANENT STATE OF BEING.
THE BEST WE CAN HOPE FOR IS CONTENTMENT.
THAT MAKES SENSE. I'M PRETTY HAPPY RIGHT NOW WATCHING THESE YOUNGS HAVE SO MUCH FUN.
YEAH, ME, TOO.
JULIA WERTZ

THE NEWS THAT FITS

ILLUSTRATIONS BY LIANA FINCK

"Newsbreaks" are reader-sourced, found snippets of text that, per E. B. White, contain "some error of typography or judgment," and have long been how we fill the gap at the end of too-short articles. To stuff your stockings, we've dug up some favorites from the thirties.



$150 Reward. Bracelet, platinum setting, single row diamonds, lost Nov. 13, between Town Hall, upper 5th Av., 57th St. and Park Av., in Best's, taxi or on train to Irvington, N.Y.—*Adv. in the Times.*

In short, lost.

SEASONS GREETINGS
At this Holiday Season we feel a deep sense of appreciation of your good will through our business association during the year that is past.
Excelsior Exterminating & Mfg. Co.
New York, N.Y.

—*Christmas card.*

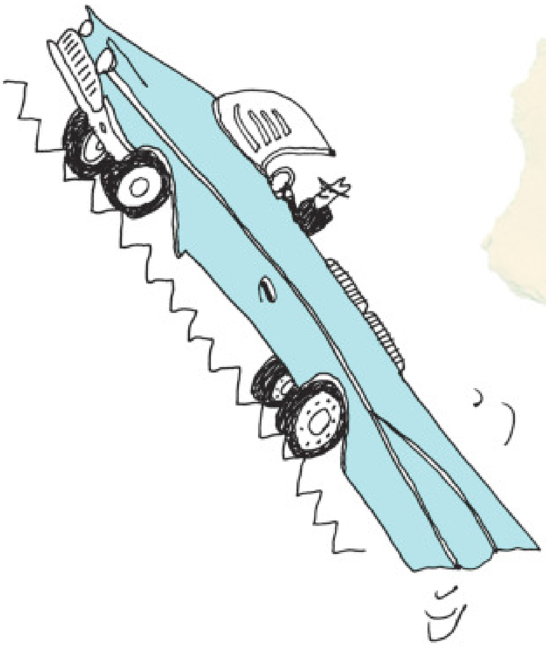
You might spread a little frankincense around, if you want.

Seven Long Island City girls have drawn the specifications of an "ideal husband." In order of importance, they believe that a husband should be able to support his wife properly; that he possess good character, good education, mental and physical cleanliness, good health; that he be a respecter of persons; that he have a strong mind; that he be sociable; that he have a purpose in life; that he be honest.—*The World.*

And, needless to say, that he somehow manage to get to Long Island City.

WANT single, immaculate, lower 5th Av., private family; reasonable. D 491 Times.
—*Adv. in the Times.*

You'll tire of them, mark our words.



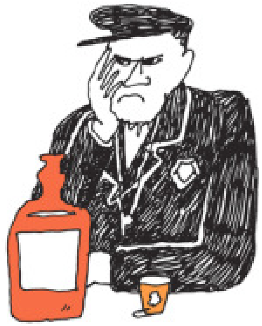
NEATEST TRICK OF THE WEEK

[*From the Times*]

So I stole a Hupmobile sedan about 5 o'clock on the afternoon of Aug. 11 at Ninth Avenue and Fortieth Street. I drove the car to an apartment on 144th Street, one flight up.

O'Rourke was held in $50 bail on a charge of transporting three bottles of beer and a pint of whiskey, which was preferred by the local police.—*The World.*

Who are often choosy.



Of all her husbands, Eugenia loved Hoyt best—and he did the most to prove that he loved her.

After their second divorce he tried to leap from an upper floor of the Ritz Carlton. Later he did jump off a liner in New York Harbor, and was rescued just in time to save his life.

His final gesture of love, which finally won Eugenia into a third marriage with him, was eating a whiskbroom.—*The Daily Mirror.*

That breaks 'em down.

WOMAN—Socialist, well connected, to introduce her friends needing fine coats to one of New York's most exclusive manufacturers. Your name does not appear whatsoever. Replies strictly confidential. Write Box 772, Real Service, 15 E. 4th.—*The Herald Tribune.*

We thought all fine coats had to be divided up among everybody.

IT'S THE PLACE TO HAVE IT

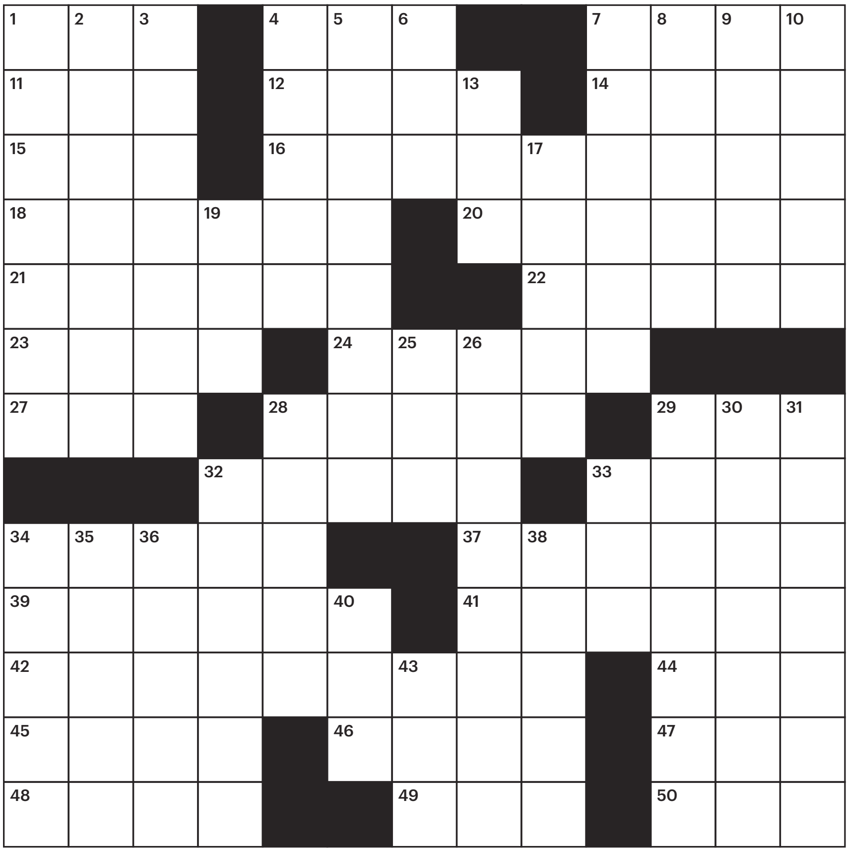
[*Social note in South Carolina paper*]

Mme. Rebecca returned last Friday after spending an indescribable time in New York City.

TRIPLE PLAY

BY BROOKE HUSIC AND ADAM WAGNER

A whopper of a puzzle.



ACROSS

1 Quadruple, say | Triple, say | Double, say

4 Barn inhabitant | Symbol of foolishness | Mouse hunter

7 Time in office | Time at school | Time for bed

11 ___ Tuesday (Christian holiday) | Silvery hair color | Baseball-bat material

12 Asks, as a softball question | Brain sections | They may go over a tennis player's head

14 Cookie with a Swedish Fish flavor | Cookie with a Candy Corn flavor | Cookie with a Crest Toothpaste flavor

15 Name that's an anagram of a music genre | One of the Three Musketeers | "Calvin and Hobbes" bully

16 One staying put | Rejected name for *Ms.* magazine | First name in abolitionism

18 Shut up, with "it" | Put under a seat, say | Out in the open

20 Speedy critters | Subjects of heliciculture | Sights on a rainy day

21 Sign in a bike-shop window | Like a vacant apartment, perhaps | For sale

22 "___ Dreams" (Heart hit) | The nearer ones | Rhyme for "chose"

23 Pentathlon gear | Blunt stone weapon | Foil alternative

24 "Groundhog Day" co-writer | "Groundhog Day" director | "Groundhog Day" star

27 Ad follower | "Finding Your Secularism" band | Dream letters

28 Legally responsible | Torts topic | Subject of New York Times Co. v. Sullivan

29 "Ready, ___, go!" | Objective | It's taken before a shot

32 Jupiter, for one | Dancer's teammate | Flier with a tail

33 Suffix meaning "against" | Person voting "nay" | 2016 Rihanna album

34 "The commercials are over!" | "Sorry, I have to cancel!" | "You're going down!"

37 Brand with a swoosh logo | "Impossible Is Nothing" sloganeer | Puma rival

39 Type of line | Sparsely covered | Like "t"s

41 Organ parts | Gas, etc. | Tricycle trio

42 With 29-Down, party game . . . or a hint to this puzzle's theme

44 Really fun | Extinguished | Reading material, for short

45 Sleek, to a gearhead | Partner of "astro" for some engineering majors | Extremely dense chocolate-bar brand

46 "Anne of Green Gables," for one | "The Count of Monte Cristo," for one | "The Real Housewives of Orange County," for one

47 Decorate, in a way | Water vapor | Clinch

48 ___ Ness monster | Secluded valley | Country singer Campbell

49 Boolean operators that can be exclusive | What ampersands often represent | Sterile environments, for short

50 Particularly: Abbr. | Paris's country, on Olympic scoreboards | Medium's purported skill

DOWN

1 Lemming relative | Stuart Little, for one | ___ wheel

2 Carbon, vis-à-vis nitrogen | Springfield ballplayer on "The Simpsons" | Elemental cousin

3 Something to prove | Wild guess | Math-class topic

4 Mary-Kate who played Michelle on "Full House" | Ashley who played Michelle on "Full House" | Elizabeth who played Michelle on "Full House"

5 Feature of some seventies car interiors | Crown molding, e.g. | Metalworking detail

6 25-Down's predecessor, for short | Great Society POTUS | Prez from Texas

7 Scrolls around for a while | Sacred Hindu scriptures | Ark texts

8 Senator Sanders | First name of the golfer known as the Big Easy | Longtime TV roommate

9 Rods' partners | Keeps calm | Spools

10 Inspector of British TV | Telegraph pioneer Samuel | Code broken by Alan Turing

13 Pierce Brosnan–Meryl Streep duet in "Mamma Mia!" | "Everything's A-O.K." | SZA album that followed "Ctrl"

17 "-" meaning, sometimes | Up to | Going past

19 Very early | Huge | Descriptor for a bit

25 Nickname for 6-Down's successor | Honest ___ | Half a Hamilton

26 "Love Is a Battlefield" or "Life Is a Highway" | It may be mixed | "Boom," "splash," or "thud"

28 One removed from the pack | Courtesy from an auto-repair shop | Hermit, say

29 See 42-Across

30 Biased writing | They may be used for emphasis | What Ctrl + B creates

31 Lapse | Part of a flawless performance | Reason to backtrack

32 Major American food crop | Makeup of some balls | Take a liking (to)

33 Thwart | Relief | Word with "Live" or "Band"

34 Dog-collar attachment | E-mail attachment | Luggage attachment

35 Alternative to hot air | Pre-shower need | Answer to the classic riddle "What gets wetter the more it dries?"

36 Stock | Market | Crash

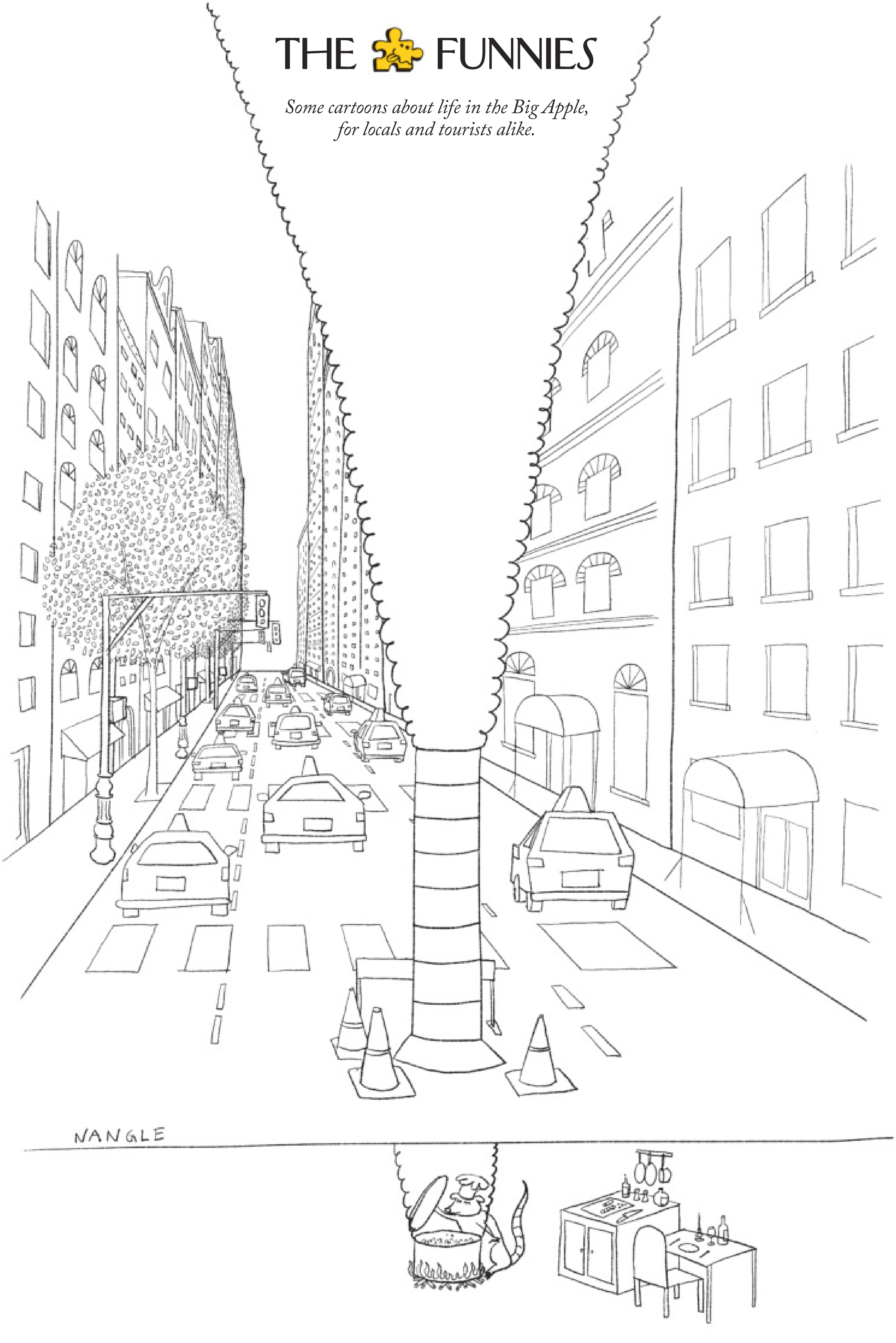
38 Newspaper sections | Poolside furniture | Places for pupils

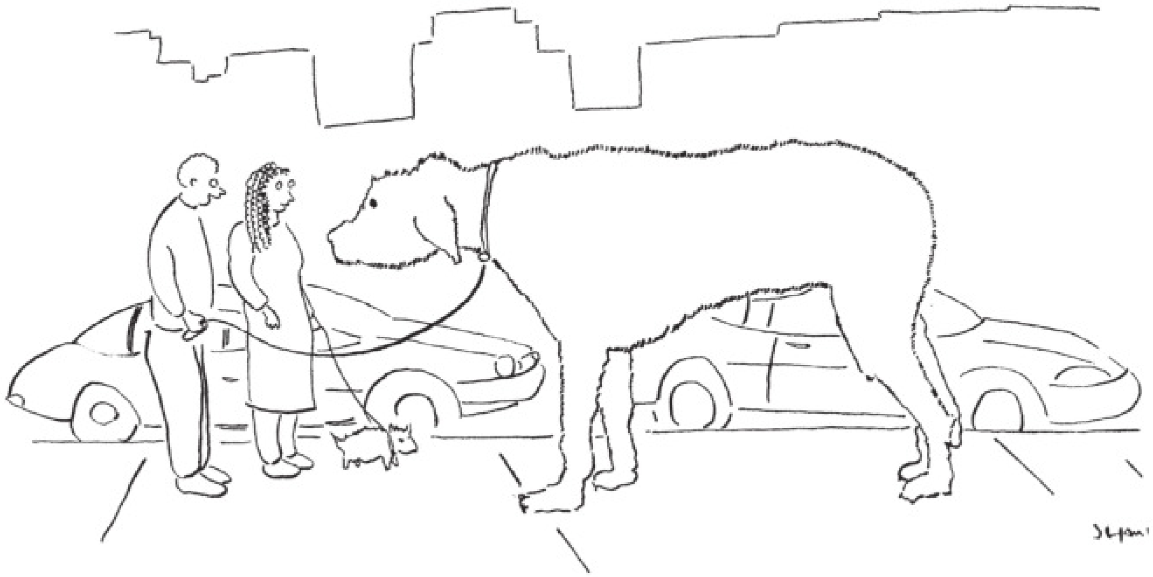
40 Christen | Subtitle | Knight

43 Smallest prime | Also | Excessively

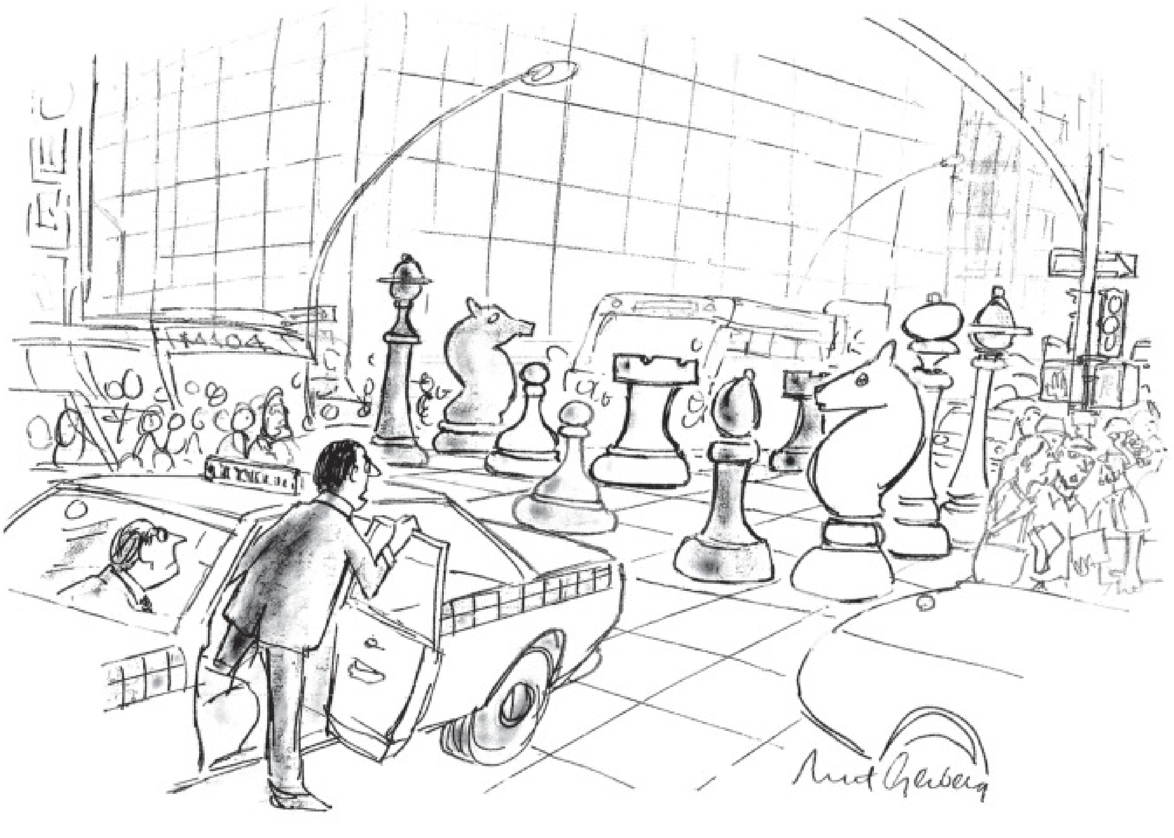
THE FUNNIES

*Some cartoons about life in the Big Apple,
for locals and tourists alike.*

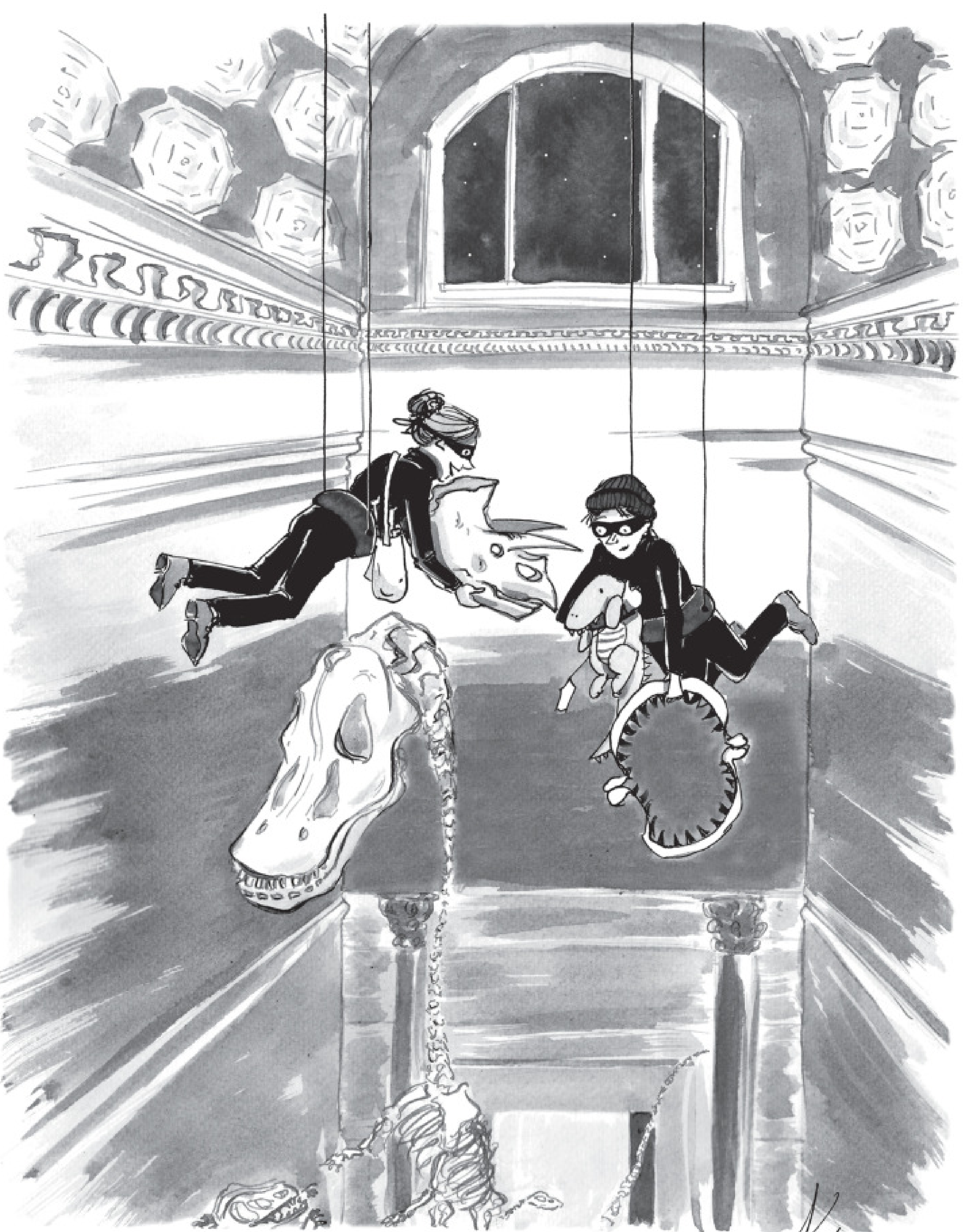




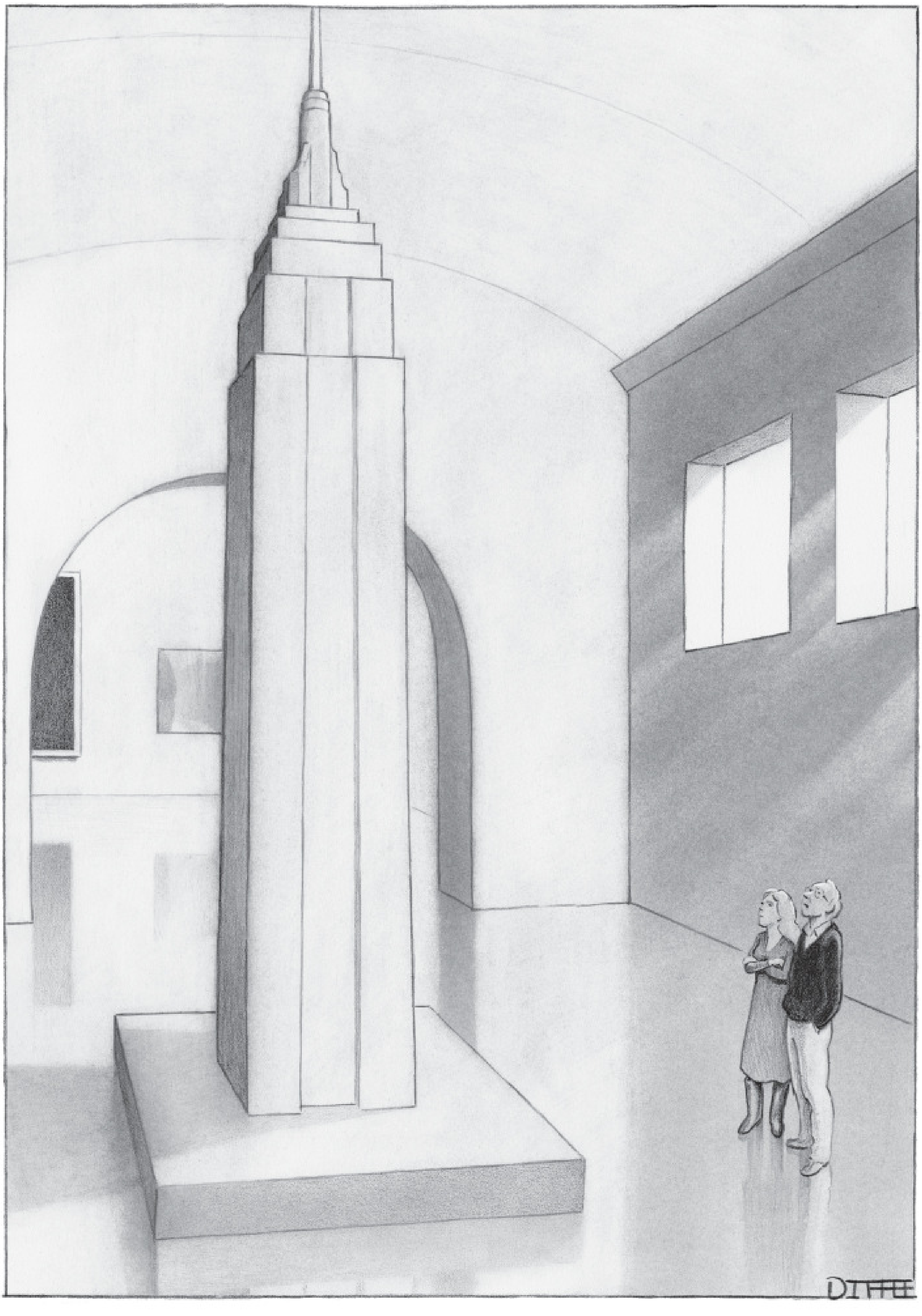
"They were originally bred to retrieve taxis."



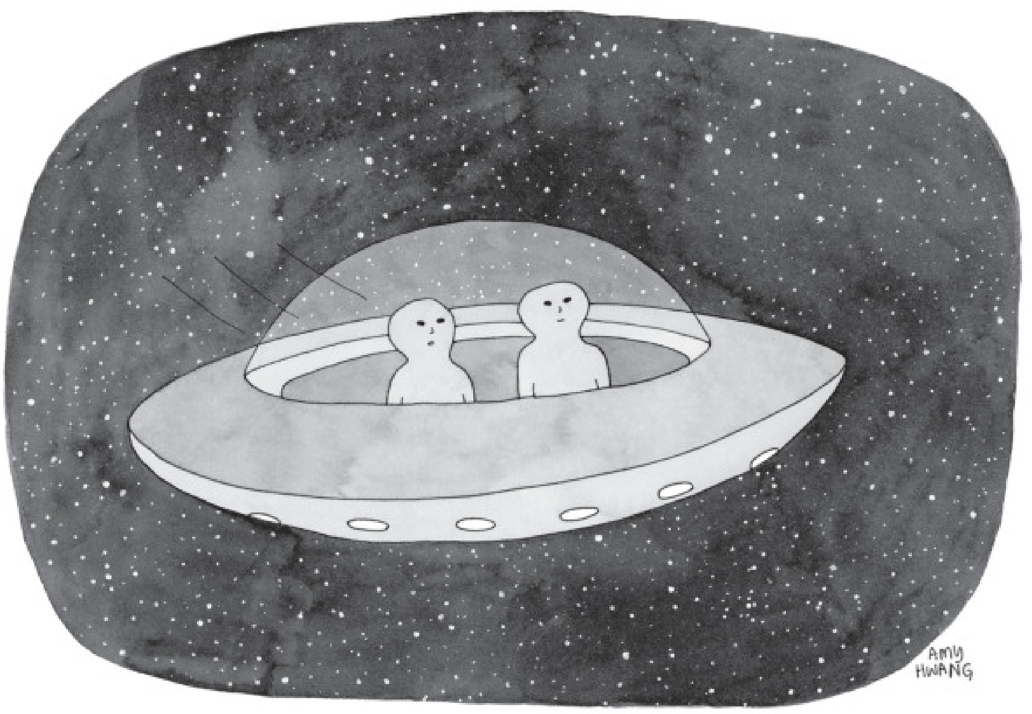
"C'mon, c'mon! Move already!"



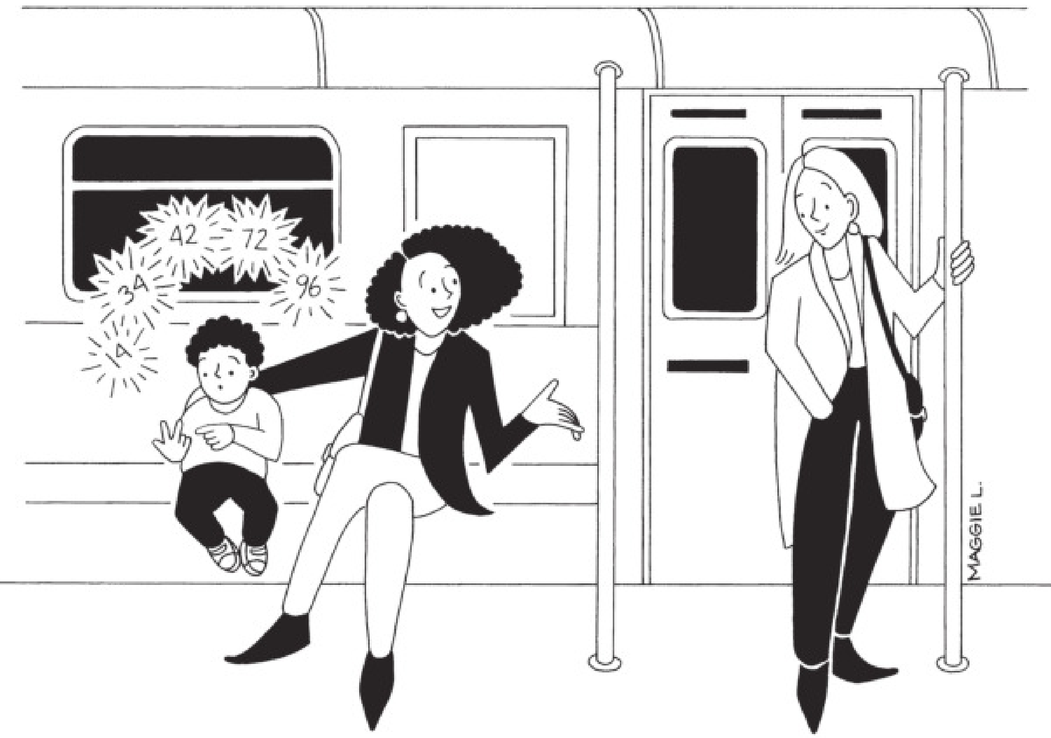
"I mean, why even live in the city if you're not going to do New York City things?"



"Makes me wish I'd kept that gorilla suit."



"I knew the Milky Way would be faster than the B.Q.E."


42
72
34
96
14
MAGGIE L.

"He can count by twos, by fives, and by express stops."

In early September, La Zambra, a five-star golf resort near Málaga, in southern Spain, hosted a jamboree for an organization called the Supercar Owners Circle. At the event, wealthy car enthusiasts—almost exclusively men—gathered to show off their vehicles, gawp at other people's, and drive the mountainous roads of Andalusia faster than was strictly legal. The gathering, which took place over a long weekend, was by invitation only. Admission, along with room and board, cost about nine thousand dollars. "Only the most prestigious and uncompromising supercars of past and present are eligible," the club's Web site warned. "The final decision lies with the admission board, which consists of both S.O.C. members and external automotive specialists."

On the Thursday evening that I arrived at La Zambra, in an Uber, the parking lot was already half full. Each car had been allotted a particular spot. I introduced myself to a thirtysomething Brit with a Midlands accent, who was walking the lot, occasionally taking photographs. He called himself Zak, but preferred not to give his surname. He'd arrived in a bright-blue McLaren 765LT Coupe, an aggressive-looking sports car with a four-litre engine for which he had paid five hundred and seventy thousand dollars. McLaren was his favorite make of car, he explained, because "everything is British"; he also loved "the sound and the vibration" he experienced when driving the coupe. Many supercar collectors rarely take their vehicles out of the garage, but Zak liked to use his for daily chores. "I go to the shops in it," he said. "I stick it in a multistory car park. All right, I do a couple of laps before I find a spot—but I *use* it."

Many of the cars in the lot were considerably more expensive and rarer than Zak's McLaren, and he admitted that he thought himself fortunate to have been invited. I asked him if he coveted any of the other cars. He pointed out a Bugatti Chiron, with lusciously curved side panels and a cartoonishly large grille. The Chiron costs at least three million dollars, and all the cars of its limited run of five hundred have been sold. "I quite fancy a Bugatti," Zak said.

I asked him what he did for work. He evaded the question, telling me that he travelled to the south of Spain every

A Bugatti Chiron Super Sport, near the company's factory, in France. The car, which

A REPORTER AT LARGE

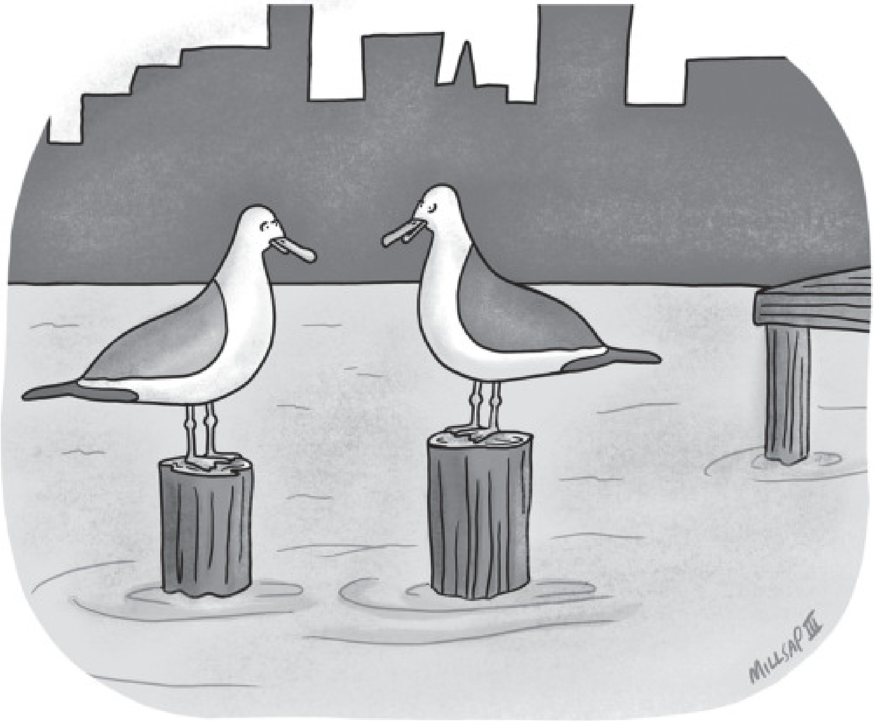
SPEED

The competition to create the world's fastest road cars—and the rich people who drive them.

BY ED CAESAR

has lusciously curved side panels, costs at least three million dollars. One version surpassed 300 m.p.h.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY RAFAŁ MILACH



"Maybe sometime you could come over to *my* *piling?"*

summer to drive various sports cars that he owns. The blue McLaren's seats are embroidered with an Instagram handle, @zakttroy. I checked the account for biographical information. It featured photographs of cars and expensive restaurants, described Zak as an "entrepreneur," located him in "Mayfair/Dubai/Marbella," and listed vehicles he owned, which included another McLaren, three Lamborghinis, a Mercedes S.U.V., two Ferraris, a Porsche, two BMWs, and a Mini. I pressed him on the job question. "Mate, I don't really work," he said.

Zak's summer residence was near La Zambra, so he'd driven his car directly to the event. This put him in the minority of S.O.C. delegates. Of the fifty or so cars invited to La Zambra, most were sent ahead to Málaga on trucks and disgorged near the hotel, where their owners retrieved them and then drove a few hundred yards into the resort. Outside the main gate, which was manned by two security guards, a crowd of car spotters, mostly young and male, had gathered. Some were professional journalists with heavy cameras; others were kids with iPhones. Each incoming car was quickly surrounded by photographers and forced to slow to a crawl. After a Ferrari snaked through the crowd, I asked one of the spotters which car he was most excited to see. He thought for a moment, then said that there was a purple Regera, made by the boutique Swedish car company Koenigsegg, that he longed to photograph. His answer was pleasing. The next day, for a few hours only, the purple Regera would be my ride.

Many of the cars at the S.O.C. weekend were no mere supercars; they qualified as "hypercars." Both "supercar" and "hypercar" are slippery categories. Jason Barlow, a former host of the BBC show "Top Gear," told me, in an e-mail, that there was no consensus on definitions, observing that "you could argue that Alfa Romeo, Bentley, Bugatti, Mercedes and others were making supercars in the nineteen-twenties," if "supercar" meant a sports car that exceeded normal parameters. He personally felt that "year zero" for the supercar was 1966, when the Lamborghini Miura was launched. The Miura, he noted, "shifted the paradigm in two key ways—it looked incredible, and its creators moved the engine to the middle." This location equalizes weight distribution, allowing all four wheels to maintain better traction. "From then on, any self-respecting supercar had to look beautiful or outrageous (preferably both), and it had to be mid-engined."

In Barlow's understanding, the first hypercar was the McLaren F1, which was launched in 1992, after four years of design and manufacture. The F1 reached a top speed of 240.1 m.p.h., then a world record for a road car. Barlow said, "It had everything. It was ultra-exclusive, had a carbon-fibre chassis and body, a race-bred V-12 engine, and was propelled into being by the vision of one individual, in this case Gordon Murray"—a British South African who had previously designed Formula 1 race cars. Only a hundred and six were made, and they are prized by collectors. The cost in 1992 was eight hundred thousand dollars. In 2021, an F1 sold for more than twenty million. Elon Musk used to own one; Jay Leno currently owns one; the Sultan of Brunei has seven.

The term "hypercar" entered the lexicon in the two-thousands, when other carmakers followed McLaren by producing absurdly powerful, and prohibitively expensive, limited-edition models. Although Porsche, Ferrari, and Aston Martin were among the established companies that entered the market, several new companies emerged that made *only* hypercars. Four of these specialists were named for their owners: Hennessey, in Texas; Pagani, in Italy; Rimac, in Croatia; and Koenigsegg, in Sweden. Bugatti, a dormant brand that had made some of the most powerful sports cars of the early twentieth century—including the voluptuous Bugatti Type 57 SC Atlantic, the ne plus ultra of car design—was reawakened when it was bought by Volkswagen, in 1998.

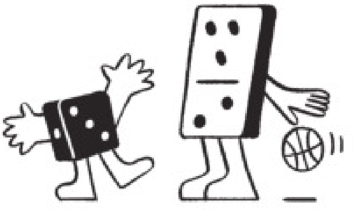
One definition of a hypercar is a vehicle that nobody needs. Most have theoretical top speeds approaching or exceeding 300 m.p.h., which is much faster than Formula 1 cars, whose top speeds are about 220 m.p.h. Many hypercars also accelerate faster than Formula 1 cars. Hypercars, though, are ostensibly manufactured for the road. (A few models are designated as track-only.) Except for Germany's autobahn, which has no speed limit, there are few public highways where one can use more than a fraction of a hypercar's power. To some motoring aficionados, driving a hypercar is like crushing a nut with a diamond-encrusted sledgehammer. "They are trophies, big-game hunter's trophies," Mikey Harvey, the editor of the car magazine *The Road Rat*, told me recently. "They have little or no engineering value, or aesthetic value, or, frankly, functional value. But they are rare. And they are king of the hill. And every one is a little bit faster than the last one. They're all so completely, undrivably fast on the road. If you take any of those cars anywhere near the outer limits of their performance envelope, you should get a long custodial sentence. . . . I don't get it. I just think it's appealing to the very worst of us."

In La Zambra's parking lot, I shared Harvey's views with Tim Burton, a blond, coltishly enthusiastic British YouTube star who broadcasts as Shmee150. Burton has done as much as anyone to promote hypercars. (His YouTube channel has received more than a billion views.) Surprisingly, Burton agreed with some of Harvey's analysis, although he came to a different conclusion. Were hypercars laughably overengineered? "Totally!" he said. "A huge part of it is bragging rights." But he saw a deeper design value in hypercars, and a fascinating marketplace. Hypercars, he said, represented "the ultimate in what we can create."

Burton and I looked at three Koenigseggs on the lot, all belonging to one Swiss family. Each car's finish had been upgraded with a proprietary super-lightweight material called Koenigsegg Naked Carbon, or K.N.C. These three cars were, I discovered, the only ones in the world finished with K.N.C. The upgrade had reduced the weight of each car by forty-four pounds. (A car's performance is roughly determined by its horsepower-to-weight ratio.) The special finish cost four hundred thousand dollars. For that amount, you could buy a Rolls-Royce Ghost, or a typically priced house in Houston. But, perversely, the Swiss family had probably made a good investment. The price of a secondhand Koenigsegg can rise fast, and rarity is a selling point. There was, Burton said, "huge hype" around the Swedish manufacturer: "Koenigseggs right now are gold."

The next morning, I met the owner of the purple Koenigsegg Regera, who had agreed to drive me into the mountains. He did not wish to be named in this article, but he was happy enough for me to describe him in general terms: a businessman in his forties who split his time between Singapore and Switzerland. In the heat, he wore white linen shorts, a cream-colored polo shirt, loafers, and Louis Vuitton sunglasses. He proved to be genial company, occasionally pausing from discussing his passions—which included luxury-watch design—to drag on a red vape pen. As we joined an S.O.C. convoy that was leaving the hotel, he told me about his car.

The purple Regera was one of three Koenigseggs he owned. He had bought this one, for three million dollars, in 2021. It was now worth about four million, he said. The insurance premiums on hypercars are so high that he surrenders the license plates on his Koenigseggs for most of the year. He keeps the vehicles in a secure garage maintained by a Koenigsegg dealer in Switzerland, insuring the cars only for the few days he wants to drive them. (Insurance for S.O.C. Spain 2023, he said, had cost him about two thousand dollars.) He recognized that hypercars were an expensive pastime, but he was prudent in other ways: he never took private jets, and he thought it absurd to spend millions of dollars on a yacht. "It's a question of taste," he said. "What you and I might consider a massive waste of money gives others pleasure."



There were only eighty Regeras in the world, and none of them had the same purple exterior as his. He'd named the car Loki, for the shape-shifting Norse god, and he wanted the color to vary in hue depending on the light. Koenigsegg, he said, had developed a new type of iridescent purple paint just for him. The car's interior was, per its owner's instructions, decorated with bright-orange leather. The colorway drew admiring comments from many other S.O.C. drivers. (The purple-and-orange scheme reminded me of a dress that Scarlett wears in "Four Weddings and a Funeral"; the Regera owner couldn't remember that part of the movie.)

The convoy entered the mountains. The Mediterranean twinkled beneath us. Most of the roads were two-lane highways, and there were few opportunities to test the Regera's power, since regular drivers blocked the way. Occasionally, we accelerated with frightening ease past another car. On one short uphill overtake, I noticed the speedometer cross 180 kilometres per hour (112 m.p.h.); after we'd slowed down, I also noticed that I'd begun to sweat.

During an early-morning briefing at La Zambra, a Spanish race-car driver who'd been hired as an adviser for the weekend told attendees what to expect from the local traffic police. The implicit message was that an understanding had been reached. ("We have no problem—but don't do crazy things.") On the morning's drive, whatever deal was in place seemed to hold: no hypercars were ticketed for speeding. At one on-ramp, I spotted a piddly Fiat Uno that had been stopped by a police car. Its owner gazed ruefully at the S.O.C. convoy roaring past.

I asked the Regera owner if he knew what the Spanish speed limit was. "No fucking idea," he said.

Later that morning, a police vehicle appeared shortly after the Regera owner did what might be termed a crazy thing: overtaking another car on a two-lane road, with traffic coming from the other direction fast enough that I momentarily forgot to breathe. "That was easy," he reassured me. Then he asked if I spoke Spanish, so that I could smooth-talk local officers if they pulled us over.

As the Regera whipped along, people in other vehicles hung phones out of their windows to take photographs. I suggested that this must be part of the appeal of owning such a car. "I actually don't like the attention it gets," the Regera owner said. "I like this car because it's like no other. It's a unique driving experience." For one thing, he said, the car had no gears. Koenigsegg had developed a “direct drive” technology that obviated the need for a mechanical gearbox, and the system was first installed in the Regera. The car’s five-litre engine, along with three electric motors, resulted in instant, unyielding torque—the rotational force that translates into acceleration. When the car sped up, I felt as if I’d been suctioned to the seat by a giant vacuum cleaner. Despite having no transmission, the car had some seventeen hundred horsepower at its disposal. The litter-strewn VW S.U.V. that I drive has about ten per cent of that power.

The farther our convoy ventured from La Zambra, the bolder the cars in our group became. A baby-blue Ferrari Daytona SP3 sped around us. The car was owned, I later learned, by a Dutch real-estate magnate with conservative views on criminal sentencing.

“For some people here, it’s a dick-measuring contest,” the Regera owner said. He’d never seen the appeal of owning a Ferrari. The cars themselves were nice, he said, but he disliked the company, which forced customers to buy several lower-value Ferraris before they could even be considered for more exclusive models. Pointing at the Daytona SP3, he said, “You’d need a thirty-million-dollar purchase history to buy that car.”

EURYDICE

I had his back, but he distrusted the obscurity.
He used to complain that I walked too quickly;

now I was measuring paces, hanging back,
willing him the confidence not to check.

It’s not that he wasn’t alert. Despite the power
of his voice, he had always been a listener;

that’s what drew me to him first. He didn’t perform
when not performing. That’s why I saw him

where I couldn’t see others, who made an audience
of everyone they met. Now, under surveillance,

he needed to listen for words I couldn’t vocalize,
being a shade—to intuit what I could visualize

but not describe, and have faith I was there.
Sometimes I think it’s I who erred,

lost in scenes from the realm of the living:
lying in bed with him or his singing

or both, taking bread from the oven on Sundays,
walking through snow-covered fields like an ordinary

We pulled into a private racetrack, which had been rented for a few hours by the S.O.C. The organizers wanted the cars to perform a leisurely parade circuit of the track, so that they could take some high-quality pictures. Instead, everybody gunned it. As the Koenigsegg accelerated, I gripped the sides of the seat. After a few fast circuits, the organizers called a halt to the fun and asked the drivers to park in rows for a photograph. The Regera pulled up next to a Porsche 918 Spyder that was decked out in the red, green, and yellow color blocking of the old VW Harlequin. The Regera owner had told me that he hated the garish scheme of the 918. Both drivers lowered their windows.

“Beautiful car!” the Porsche driver said, in a Dutch accent.

“Thank you!” the Regera owner answered, without returning the compliment.

After some small talk, the two drivers bonded over their views on the Aston Martin Valkyrie. A green Valkyrie had arrived at the track, and its owner had spent about ten minutes preparing to drive it: changing the seat position and the seat-belt configuration, and putting on a helmet. Developing the Valkyrie, I later learned, had caused grave financial distress for Aston Martin. The car had initially been designed by the two principals of Red Bull’s Formula 1 team, Christian Horner and Adrian Newey, whom Aston Martin had approached in 2015 to build a “race car for the road.” But there were innumerable design problems, and the manufacturing process was delayed by three years, leading some customers who had placed deposits to demand their money back. Several lawsuits—including a hundred-and-fifty-million-dollar claim against Aston Martin, brought by dealers who had underwritten the project—followed. In 2021, at the Goodwood Festival of Speed, in West Sussex, a Valkyrie broke down, embarrassing the company further.

Aston Martin is still building Valkyries. It plans to make a total of a hundred and fifty, along with forty specialized track versions and eighty-five convertibles. Reportedly, the car’s software remains glitchy. According to an owner, Aston Martin charges a three-hundred-and-fifty-thousand-dollar service fee for the first three years of ownership, on top of the three-million-dollar purchase price. (Aston Martin denies this.) Nevertheless, all the cars have been sold. The Valkyrie is certainly striking: high wheel arches and a low-slung cockpit give it a leonine profile. But, the Regera owner complained, why would someone want to drive a car so loud that you were forced to wear noise-cancelling headphones, and which basically required you to strap yourself in like a fighter pilot? The Porsche owner agreed. “My friend has one, says it’s shit,” he said. “Always breaking.”

The convoy members left the racetrack, drove a short distance, then stopped for lunch. Outside the restaurant, I spotted Christian von Koenigsegg, the C.E.O. and founder of Koenigsegg, talking animatedly to a rapt group of car owners. Von Koenigsegg is tall,

couple, not one blessed with a singular art.
I got distracted, recalling the moment we met,

how he barely even mentioned he could sing.
He'd wanted to know about *me*. Now, watching

him lead the way back to sunlight, I forgot
that, as he walked, he could not see me—not

that that could be helped. Who's to say
I wouldn't have looked back, too? That day,

like every day, was fated, so there's no use
bemoaning what we did or didn't do,

yet, if we didn't regret, we wouldn't be human.
I tell myself that what might have happened

is illusory anyway, that, had we succeeded,
we would have trudged down the tedious

path of convention, boredom, resentment.
That my vision was fiction, that fulfillment

did come to pass, each of us dwelling forever
in what could have been, for the other.

—*Adrienne Su*

friendly, and as bald as a doorknob. Introducing myself, I told him that I'd loved being a passenger in the purple Regera, which was broadly truthful. (An entirely honest audit of my feelings would have noted some British middle-class embarrassment at being driven in something so flashy, and some occasional terror.) He smiled and, ignoring the car owners, began telling me about the Regera's lack of transmission, and how he'd been inspired to design its power train after driving a Tesla in 2011, and saying to himself, "Wow! That instant power!" His next thought was "How can *I* make something super torquey like that?"

A few weeks later, I met von Koenigsegg at the entrance to his factory, in Ängelholm, Sweden, about an hour's drive north of Malmö. The company operates out of several hangars on the site of a disbanded fighter-pilot unit of the Swedish Air Force. Koenigsegg uses the emblem of the old unit, a cartoon ghost, on its cars. Test-drives take place on an adjacent airfield. Near the complex's front door, visitors are greeted by a collection of Koenigseggs: past, present, and future.

One car on display is a Gemera, the world's first four-seater hypercar. The Gemera, a PHEV—plug-in-hybrid electric vehicle—with a maximum twenty-three hundred horsepower, can accelerate from zero to sixty in less than two seconds. The first models are to be delivered to customers by the end of 2024. The idea of packing one's kids into the back of a family hypercar is amusing, and somewhat horrifying. It would certainly enliven a school commute.

At von Koenigsegg's invitation, I stuffed my six-feet-five frame into the back of the Gemera. It was reasonably comfortable. I also noticed cup holders, which traditional sports-car manufacturers consider heretical. The Gemera has eight: four chilled, four heated. "Ferrari never had cup holders—we always had cup holders," von Koenigsegg told me. "They think you should not drink while you're driving a Ferrari, and I'm, like, 'Maybe you're thirsty?' "

He recounted the company's origins. When he was growing up, Sweden's biggest car manufacturers were Volvo and Saab. Few children have ever fantasized about owning a Volvo or a Saab. Von Koenigsegg's bedroom was decorated with posters of Lamborghinis. As a teenager, he developed the ambition to make "an exciting sports car," and this desire endured into adulthood. In 1994, at the age of twenty-two, with money he'd made trading stocks and commodities, he launched what he then called "the Koenigsegg project."

Von Koenigsegg said, "When I got into it, I realized, I don't have the resources to set up a big production plant. But I have the resources to *hand-build* things. Now, that's a lot of hours per car, and that's very expensive. How will I make someone pay a lot of money for one of the cars? Well, it has to be something truly special." He manufactured hypercars, he explained, "out of necessity": "The only path was to make the cars super exciting."

The company sold no cars in its first eight years, although it made an impressive-looking prototype in 1996, using an Audi V-8 engine. For much of that period, the startup was based in an old thatch-roofed farmhouse, and just keeping the lights on was a struggle. The company had no income, so von Koenigsegg lived in basic accommodations near the farmhouse and took no salary, instead continuing to trade stocks to support himself and a handful of employees, including his wife, Halldora. In 1995, his father, Jesko von Koenigsegg, who had sold a small electrical company, invested most of his savings in his son's business, and spent some time sleeping on his son's floor. In 2003, part of the farmhouse burned down. The company moved to the abandoned airfield. Christian von Koenigsegg, who now has two sons, one of whom works for the company, told me that, without his father's support, "we probably wouldn't have made it." In 2020, on his father's eightieth birthday, Christian presented him with a Koenigsegg model named for him: the Jesko. Six hundred and fifty people now work for Koenigsegg, and its cars sell out almost the moment they're announced.

Von Koenigsegg has benefitted from a change in the habits of owners. "When we started delivering cars, in 2002, maybe a customer had one other nice sports car," he said. "Two or three was pretty extreme. Now forty or fifty cars isn't unusual." Hypercars, he noted, have become their own investment class, given that coveted models gain in value. James Banks, a hypercar dealer, told me that there was a solid wealth-management strategy behind the trend. In many countries, though not in the U.S., automobiles are considered a "wasting asset," whatever their profitability in the secondhand market; hypercars are therefore "a very good store of wealth, because there's generally no capital-gains tax when you sell."

The hand-built ethos still prevails at Koenigsegg. Unlike most manufacturers, which outsource auto-body parts to other companies, Koenigsegg makes nearly everything itself, from transmissions to wheels. When I asked von Koenigsegg which parts of his cars were made by other manufacturers, he paused, then said, laughing, "The windshield wiper on the Jesko." He also admitted that the Gemera's brakes came from a British firm, AP Racing.

Von Koenigsegg led me around the factory. At one point, we passed a man polishing a small car part that was unidentifiable to me. Von Koenigsegg explained that it was a section of a steering wheel, and noted that, before his employees assemble a car, they spend three hundred and fifty hours polishing components. In another area of the factory, he showed me an engine that resembled a giant metallic heart. A few mechanics were tinkering with a valve. "We have the highest output-per-litre engine in the world," von Koenigsegg said. "A five-litre engine with sixteen hundred horsepower. It's crazy."

It did seem crazy. (Bugatti draws similar horsepower from the Chiron's engine, which is eight litres.) To achieve extraordinary numbers, von Koenigsegg excitedly explained, he had made hundreds of refinements to the standard design of a gasoline engine: "It's how the intake is designed, how the injectors are positioned, how strong the block has to be, how strong the gaskets and head studs are. It's the porting, it's the camshaft profiles, it's the shaping of the piston dome, it's the combustion chamber in the cylinder head, it's software programming, it's ion-sensing coil-on plugs . . ."

Von Koenigsegg continued in this vein. He enjoyed discussing his work. At several points during the tour, he stopped to give disquisitions on why his electrical inverters, or chassis-testing facilities, or over-the-air software updates were superior. These explanations were all buttressed by a raft of statistics. Listening to von Koenigsegg describe his cars was like standing beneath a waterfall. As a designer, he had a relentless curiosity and a willingness to jettison old ideas. There were no gears in the Regera; in the Jesko, there were nine. He spoke of his weighty responsibilities as a business owner and a manager, and how it ate into his time to create. His home sauna, he said, remained the best place to think.

As we surveyed a production line of cars in various stages of undress, von Koenigsegg discussed the demanding nature of his customers, who often requested bespoke details. Upholstering a car with ostrich leather was particularly expensive, he said, and not only because of the material's cost. In order to be "homologated"—authorized for use on public roads—a new material had to be tested against seat sensors for at least two months. Von Koenigsegg said that an ostrich-leather upgrade might cost "a couple hundred thousand euros."

"We like that people customize, in a way, because it makes the car more unique," he went on. "And it's kind of an industry standard. At the same time, it's always a lot of work for us and a hassle. So we're not *unhappy* if they don't do it, because it makes our life a little more livable. So, for a customization, we put a number on paper that seems very, very high. And it is."

Performance numbers clearly matter more to von Koenigsegg's customers than dollar numbers. His cars have broken many records, including, this past summer, one for the fastest acceleration to 400 k.p.h.—about 250 m.p.h.—followed by deceleration back to zero. The Regera did this in 28.81 seconds. But the most prized number, he said, was a car's top speed.

According to the Paris-based Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile, a top-speed record is made by averaging the highest speed a car reaches going in two opposing directions. (The averaging neutralizes the effect of wind assistance.) In 2017, a Koenigsegg Agera RS became the world's fastest production road car, recording a two-way speed average of 277.9 m.p.h. on a closed stretch of road near Las Vegas. It irks von Koenigsegg that, since 2019, Bugatti has claimed to have the fastest road car, after a Bugatti Chiron Super Sport hit 304.8 m.p.h. on Volkswagen's test track in Ehra-Lessien, Germany. That Bugatti was a pre-production model rather than a retail model—and it was driven in only one direction. In October, 2020, there was also an embarrassing episode in which the American hypercar manufacturer SSC claimed that its Tuatara model had achieved a two-way average of 316.1 m.p.h. The company later admitted that the speed-recording equipment it had used was faulty. The Tuatara's actual speed was considerably under 300 m.p.h.

"*We* did it according to the F.I.A. rules," von Koenigsegg said. "According to us, the Agera is the fastest production car." Realizing, perhaps, that he sounded combative, he added, "There are no rules—I'm just saying what *my* rules are. If you're not delivering that car to customers, is it a production car? It's more of a question than a comment."

In any event, von Koenigsegg hoped to soon make such quibbles academic. He said that his new car, the Jesko Absolut, which is scheduled for delivery in early 2024, could break 304 m.p.h., and might even become the first road car to break 500 k.p.h., or 310 m.p.h. The Jesko Absolut was the fastest car that he'd ever made, and perhaps *would* ever make. New homologation rules around the world might make building an ever-faster road-legal car impossible. Plans for a world-record attempt would start once one of his forty or so Jesko Absolut customers agreed to let his new car be driven to the limit of its capabilities. Would breaking the top-speed record again make von Koenigsegg happy? "Sure, in a 'mission accomplished' way," he said. "It proves the extremeness of what we're doing."

In the race to reach 500 k.p.h., Koenigsegg has competition, and not just from Bugatti. Next year, Hennessey, the Texan manufacturer, will attempt its own world speed record. This past July, I visited its headquarters, which are west of Houston, just off I-10. Again there were hangars. Hennessey's production is di-

Andy Wallace, a soft-spoken former race-car driver in his sixties, is now one of Bugatti's so-called test pilots.

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vided between a car-and-truck-customization business, which reëngineers some seven hundred cars a year, and Hennessey Special Vehicles, which makes a small number of its own sports cars.

Inside the customization shop were Ram trucks having their vital organs engorged. Within the Special Vehicles area, there were several versions of the company's Venom F5, a sleek and monstrously powerful car. The Venom F5 is so called because the most destructive category on the Fujita tornado scale, which measures winds up to 318 m.p.h., is F5. Only ninety-nine Venom F5s will be manufactured.

I had barely arrived before an employee used a six-point harness to strap me into the passenger seat of a deep-blue Venom F5 Coupe. The car, I was told, belonged to a "Silicon Valley person," and had once reached 271 m.p.h. on a private track. A young driver named Alex Roys got into the car, and chatted with me as he exited the garage. (I later learned that he is Hennessey's chief operating officer.) I could barely hear him over the engine's growl. The English journalist Jack Rix has described getting into a Venom F5 as "exciting, but tinged with terror," adding, "Even at idle, the engine burbles away like a T. rex puffing on a pack of B. & H."—a brand of British cigarettes.

Roys said that he wanted me to feel "emotion." It wouldn't be a long journey: two laps of a small test track. We did a warmup lap in Sports Mode—or Baby Mode, as Roys called it—hitting 155 m.p.h. Then he switched to something called F5 Mode. Before the final, short straightaway, he asked me if I was ready. When he hit the accelerator, it was like being strapped to a surface-to-air missile. Each gear change provoked the car to ever more noise and aggression. We hit 170 m.p.h., then braked to make the final turn. I stifled the urge to scream, but not to curse.

John Hennessey, the company's laconic sixty-one-year-old owner, was once in the asbestos-removal business, before his "hobby got out of control" and he started modifying cars full time. In 2007, he showed some journalists at a trade show a sketch that he'd made of a sports car; it combined a Lotus Elise chassis with a Dodge Viper V10 engine. The sketch appeared in a magazine, and two weeks later, he told me, "a guy from Dubai" ordered one. Hennessey built twelve of these vehicles, which he called the Venom GT. One reached 270 m.p.h.

He then decided to build a hypercar from scratch. The first Venom F5 was finished during the pandemic. The company has now delivered twenty-two of them. Hennessey built the F5, he told me, "as the ultimate expression of our business," adding, "It's pure, unapologetic horsepower."

We discussed how Bugatti had recently declared that it was no longer interested in chasing speed records. Hennessey smiled and said that any hypercar manufacturer who made such statements wasn't being honest. "Those European guys like to sandbag and say, ‘Well, it’s not really our top priority,’” he said. “And I just kind of laugh and say, ‘Yeah, *right!*’ We all know each other and get along, but I love having rivalries. And I don’t like being in third or fourth place. We’re very intent on going over three hundred miles per hour in two directions, which would make the speed record official.”

To this end, Hennessey recently hired a new head of engineering, Brian Jones, from Multimatic, a Canadian firm that supplies components for other manufacturers. Jones, who worked on both the Ford GT and the Mercedes-AMG hypercars, will be responsible for what is known within Hennessey as the “V-Max attempt.” I spoke to Jones by video call, and he told me what would be required to break the record: extreme horsepower, courtesy of the F5’s giant engine, and low drag.

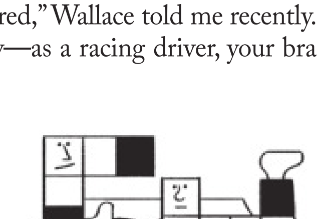
All designers of fast vehicles obsess about drag—the aerodynamic effects of airflow over a vehicle. A hypercar designer had to shift his thinking, von Koenigsegg said, from “traditional aerodynamics to *aerospace* aerodynamics.” Frank Heyl, the German designer of the Chiron Super Sport, told me that when he was first asked to create a Bugatti that could exceed 300 m.p.h., in 2018, he immediately identified the most difficult problem to solve: “*A* x *Cd*,” or the frontal area of the car multiplied by drag. Heyl said, “The laminar airflow—the air that attaches to the body of the car—has to tear off in the rear somewhere.” A bigger tear-off area created poorer aerodynamics. Heyl’s solution for what became the Super Sport was a long tail. In his first sketches, he drew a car with an elegant rear. The finished car not only has a longer tail than earlier Bugatti hypercars; its exhausts are stacked on top of one another, allowing for a longer underbody diffuser and a tiny tear-off area.

Both Hennessey and Jones, though, believed that important aspects of breaking the speed record for a road-legal car had nothing to do with the vehicle itself. Choosing the right course was paramount. You needed a straight section long enough to let you accelerate to 300 m.p.h. and then decelerate before crashing into a corner. A car driving 300 m.p.h. covers a mile within twelve seconds. The VW test ring, where Bugatti had reached 304.8 m.p.h., was the obvious place to make the V-Max attempt: it has a straightaway 5.4 miles long. But there was no way that a rival would let Hennessey borrow its track. John Hennessey had discussed using a closed stretch of public highway in Texas, but driving at such a speed on a public road was fraught with safety risks. Jones’s top prospect is the Johnny Bohmer Proving Grounds, at the Kennedy Space Center, in Florida, which has a three-mile straightaway. The car had already been tested there, at lower speeds. “It’s a very good facility,” Jones said. “It’s very smooth. You have an acceleration road onto the facility. With the right drag—yeah, it’s possible.”

Many discussions about breaking the top-speed record ignore the human factor. Driving at 300 m.p.h. is a fearsome prospect. Most things travelling that fast are flying. A fully laden Boeing 747 takes off at about 185 m.p.h. For a car to safely conduct a top-speed attempt, it and the road must be in virtually perfect condition. Burst a rear tire and the front of the car will lift; lift the front and the car becomes a plane. It takes a certain kind of person to keep his foot pressed to the floor.

Andy Wallace, a soft-spoken former race-car driver in his sixties, who is now one of Bugatti’s so-called test pilots, may understand high-speed driving better than anybody else. He drove the McLaren F1 that hit 240.1 m.p.h. in 1998, breaking the world record at the time; he also drove the Bugatti model in the top-speed run in 2019.

“Nothing quite prepares you for three hundred,” Wallace told me recently. “It’s funny—as a racing driver, your brain is used to doing two hundred, two-ten. If you add another ten per cent on that, you’re in a place where you’re not familiar. . . . It’s all whizzing by. You keep doing that up to over three hundred. You’re looking around and thinking, Gee, this is *really* fast!”



Bugatti tested the Chiron Super Sport multiple times, in wind tunnels and at Ehra-Lessien, before making the top-speed attempt. In the days before the 2019 run, Wallace drove several times at about 280 m.p.h. while engineers measured the downforce on various parts of the car—insuring, in his words, that “it would stick to the road.”

Wallace explained that, at very high speeds, things had happened to the Bugatti that he did not anticipate. At about 280 m.p.h., the gyroscopic effect of the wheels turning so fast overcame the front-suspension geometry, which keeps the car straight. In other words, once the car began turning in one direction it kept turning. He likened the effect to a spinning top. At high speeds, these tiny changes made him feel as if the wheels were “off all over the place.” Sometimes a crosswind buffeted the car, and he had to make adjustments to avoid hitting the track barriers.

Bugatti’s engineers attended to the steering issues. The track was scoured for pebbles. Bugatti estimated that, at 300 m.p.h., each tire was being subjected to a seven-ton tearing force. The test car’s tires were checked and double-checked by an X-ray machine. Once Wallace and the engineers felt that they’d dealt with every issue, they made the attempt. “Things can still go wrong,” he said. “But if you never took a risk you’d never cross the road.”

The top-speed run took place on a cloudy Friday morning. Wallace came out of a banked turn onto the long straightaway, at about 160 m.p.h., and “pinned it.” He was travelling at 278 m.p.h. when a small join in the track caused the Bugatti to momentarily jump. When it landed, it “didn’t swerve as much as I was expecting,” Wallace recalled. “I thought, Great!” Acceleration past 280 m.p.h. was relatively slow, because of the volume of air that the car had to push out of the way. Wallace was committed to keeping his foot slammed on the accelerator, but he was consuming the straightaway alarmingly fast.

“The other end’s coming now, and you can *see* it coming,” he recalled, lost in the story. He needed to decelerate to 135 m.p.h. to avoid crashing at the next turn. He had planned to release the accelerator when passing a raised gantry at the side of the track, but that marker was predicated on earlier runs, when he’d driven more slowly. It would take him longer to slow down if he was actually breaking 300 m.p.h.

He hit 304.7724 m.p.h.

"It seemed a shame to lift off the accelerator, but then you see the wall coming," Wallace said. He couldn't apply the brakes—the force going through the car was too great—but he felt that he was decelerating sufficiently to make the turn. With the bend very close, however, he saw the speedometer showing 225 m.p.h. Wallace told himself, "Shit, this is not good," before "humping on the brakes." He held the car on the road through the turn, just barely, and a few minutes later he returned to a hero's welcome by the pits.

I found myself fantasizing about driving such a fast car. On a pristine fall morning in late September, I travelled to Bugatti's factory and headquarters, in Molsheim, in the Alsace region of France. Shortly after arriving, I signed a waiver releasing Bugatti from liability should I suffer injury or death. A Bugatti Chiron Super Sport—a version of the company's quickest model, limited to 273 m.p.h.—was parked outside. I was told that, later that morning, Pierre-Henri Raphanel, a former winner at Le Mans, would take me for a spin. But I didn't know whether I'd get a chance to drive the car myself.

Raphanel, an energetic Frenchman in his sixties, has an encyclopedic knowledge of automobiles, and of Bugatti history. Inside a museum at the company's headquarters, he showed me a curved writing desk made in 1902 by Carlo Bugatti, the father of the company's founder, Ettore Bugatti. The design was dominated by a single sweeping curve of polished walnut, like a breaking wave. The influence of Carlo on his son's car designs, and even on the Chiron, was plain.

Raphanel rarely stopped talking on our drive, but when he did I was struck by how quiet the interior was, especially compared with the Venom F5. Raphanel said that the Chiron was a luxury car first and a sports car second. "Normally, a sports car is noisy outside and inside," he noted. "A luxury car is quiet inside." He opened the windows to show how much noise the car kept out; it was like opening the door to an industrial furnace. The windows were double-glazed. "That's *crazy* on a supercar," he said. "That's what you find on a Rolls-Royce."

On some thinly populated stretches of road, Raphanel showed me a little of what the Bugatti could do. He said that he was going to take the engine to two thousand revolutions per minute, in third gear. (The car has seven.) He would then accelerate. He told me to "hold my body," because he'd have to brake after accumulating so much speed. I braced, but was still unprepared for the sensation that followed. Raphanel accelerated so quickly that I strained my calf muscle pushing on a phantom brake. He then decelerated to a dawdle, seemingly within a few feet. After we'd slowed down, I began giggling. "Yes," Raphanel said. "It's *ridiculous!*" When he showed me how the car cornered at high speeds, on an empty two-lane road, I noticed that the speedometer hit 235 k.p.h., or 146 m.p.h.

We pulled into a parking lot, and Raphanel offered to switch seats. He explained the paddle gears and the shift system to me, and I took off. A Bugatti Chiron Super Sport is more than six and a half feet wide. (The average car is 5.8 feet wide.) I inched out of the lot, anxious not to scrape the car on a curb, and unclear what the insurance situation was. I regretted not having scrutinized the waiver, and hoped that Bugatti had made judicious provisions.

Even at less than thirty miles per hour, I felt other drivers on the road eying me warily. Raphanel explained that everything he was going to ask me to do would be safe. It might not, however, be legal. It was possible to break the French speed limit in the Super Sport's first gear, and he wanted me to see more of the car's potential. He reassured me that he always did this with potential customers. The local police, he implied, had a gentleman's agreement regarding Bugatti test-drives; Raphanel and the other drivers tried to use only quiet roads.

We approached a stretch of freeway with just a few cars. Raphanel had told me, "When I tell you 'full power,'

"To save everyone from suffering in polite restraint, I shall eat the last slice."

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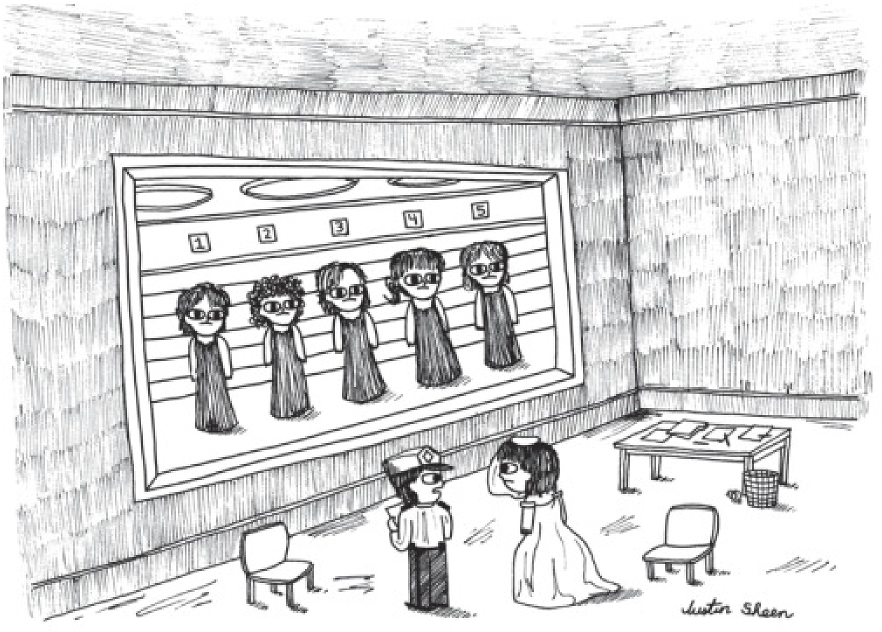

“This investigation would be easier if you had fewer bridesmaids.”

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it’s not ‘kissing the throttle.’ . . . It’s how the Americans say ‘Pedal to the metal.’ ” But when he said, “Full power,” I couldn’t commit. My right foot depressed the accelerator halfway, perhaps a little more. I’d inspected the Super Sport’s engine in the Bugatti factory. It weighed nine hundred pounds and looked as big as a Shetland pony. It seemed insane to provoke such a beast.

Raphanel reminded me to trust him. The next time, when he said, “Full power”—adding, “Full, full, full!”—I did as told. Other cars flew past the passenger window like blown leaves. My focus narrowed on the lane before me. The speedometer showed an alarmingly high number before Raphanel told me to brake. Evidently, I didn’t brake hard enough: he physically depressed my leg. As we decelerated, the car never veered from a straight line.

Afterward, my emotions were conflicted. I got an undeniable rush from the experience. But the speed, and its obverse, came almost too easily. The car was certainly a feat of engineering, but driving it felt eerily like playing a video game. The Bugatti created the dangerous illusion that there was little actual jeopardy in driving so fast. In the hours after the test-drive, my elation was laced with a vinegary shame about having floored the accelerator on a public road.

Who would buy such a car? Bugatti protects its customers’ identities, but a spokesperson was keen to tell me that a few women had bought Chirons. Social media revealed some famous owners: Cristiano Ronaldo, the soccer player; Andrew Tate, the indicted influencer; Sheikh Mohammed Al Maktoum, the ruler of Dubai. During a presentation at Bugatti’s headquarters, the head of the company’s *sur mesure* program shared his laptop’s screen on a projector, and I noticed that a Chiron Super Sport 300 onscreen had been modified for a customer called Al Thani—the name of the family that rules Qatar. I later discovered the exact model. One of the Thanis had created, in collaboration with Hermès, a Bugatti Chiron Super Sport 300 with a white exterior and a white-and-red interior. (The collaboration was described as a “one of one” edition.) I saw a YouTube video that showed the car being driven in London this past summer. It crawled through traffic in Knightsbridge, at one point waiting behind a garbage truck.

It hasn’t escaped hypercar manufacturers’ notice that the planet is warming, or that various governments have indicated their desire to phase out new internal-combustion engines within the next decade or two. The manufacturers hope to be exempted from such rules, since each vehicle is produced in very small numbers and is driven so seldom that the sector’s over-all environmental impact is tiny.

Paul Horrell, a journalist who is a juror for the European Car of the Year award, which is issued by a consortium of automobile publications, told me that there were other ways to assess hypercars’ environmental impact. On the one hand, the cars were inevitably part of a life style of conspicuous consumption that included vast properties, frequent travel on private jets, and other indulgences that contribute to climate change. On the other hand, he said, “when you develop a vehicle for performance you are, at the same time, developing for *efficiency*, because what you’re trying to do is increase the amount of power that you can get for a given amount of fuel.” By designing these vehicles, Horrell said, “you’ve effectively found ways of reducing energy consumption, and you’ve found ways of reducing weight, because you have to use these new strong materials.” Such innovations “will, with luck, transfer to more ordinary vehicles.”

Koenigsegg’s pioneering use of an engine with no camshaft in the Gemera was one example. Car designers have long dreamed of a “camless engine”—lighter, more efficient, less emissive. The Gemera’s standard engine is nicknamed the Tiny Friendly Giant. Von Koenigsegg hopes that other car manufacturers will adopt the technology, and he has already received an order from a diesel-truck manufacturer.

By contrast, John Hennessey, who once flirted with making a purely electric hypercar, wants his cars “to be the exclamation point on the end of the internal-combustion era.” He drives a Tesla to work, but told me that his company’s next car will contain a giant gasoline engine.

The future, of course, will be fully electric. Nobody makes better electric hypercars than Mate Rimac, a thirty-five-year-old Croatian with a thick, dark beard and a boyish manner. At school, he won several national and international prizes for electronics. He also began racing cars. In 2007, when he was nineteen, he accidentally blew up the engine of a 1984 BMW. Instead of replacing the engine with another internal-combustion model, which was too expensive for him, he built an electric power train. The converted BMW went 174 m.p.h. and accelerated from zero to 100 k.p.h. (62 m.p.h.) in 3.3 seconds, which was faster than any E.V. had previously gone. As with John Hennessey, a hobby became a business.

Rimac told me, "Initially, I wanted to prove that electric cars can be fun, exciting, and cool. I thought the business would be converting combustion-engine cars to electric—a pretty bad idea, technically and financially. So then I wanted to build my *own* car."

At the time, there were no high-performance electric vehicles on the market. In 2011, at the age of twenty-three, Rimac presented his Concept One car at the Frankfurt Motor Show. It was an elegant two-door coupe with a top speed of 221 m.p.h., and it could go from a stop to 62 m.p.h. in 2.4 seconds. The Concept One was easily the fastest electric car in the world. Eight were made. Each cost about a million dollars. Rimac still loves internal-combustion cars: he owns ten, including a Porsche Carrera GT. (Porsche has a twenty-per-cent stake in the Rimac Group.) But, he told me, he wanted to prove that an electric hypercar could, in many ways, "actually be better" than internal-combustion models. In the eyes of the car trade, he has succeeded.

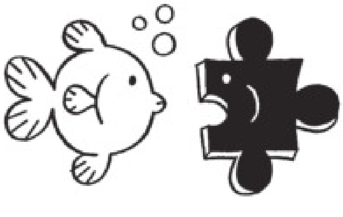
The Concept One allowed Rimac to develop two sides of his business. He sold his batteries and electric power trains to other carmakers; meanwhile, he raised money to create another hypercar, which became the Rimac Nevera. It launched in August, 2021. That November, the Rimac Group took control of Bugatti. The joint venture, known as Bugatti Rimac, now has one design team, and the business operates out of Croatia, France, and Germany. The next Bugatti model, Rimac said, will be a hybrid, but it will retain a "very emotional combustion engine."

In November, I visited the Rimac Group headquarters, outside Zagreb. In the wiring department, engineers were painstakingly positioning some of the sixteen miles of wiring that goes into each Nevera. The wiring process takes two weeks per car. One of the Neveras on the assembly line was being built for Mate Rimac himself. Its exterior was bright red. "M8" and "K8" were stitched into the seats where he and his wife, Katerina, would sit.

Later, I visited a new factory that the Rimac Group is building, a few miles from the current headquarters. At seventy-five thousand square metres, the factory is roughly the same size as Dubrovnik's Old Town. For now, it is empty, except for heavy machinery. When it opens, next year, the company will devote about a third of the space to making hypercars, and the remaining two-thirds to making components for other companies. Rimac declined to name all his clients, but some are publicly known: Porsche, Hyundai, Aston Martin, SEAT, Jaguar.

Mate Rimac had thought deeply about the future of automobiles. Hypercars, he said, were valuable precisely because they were unnecessary. "Do you need art?" he said. "Or music? Hypercars are like the culmination of all human disciplines, like art, design, science. . . . For me, it's a celebration of human ingenuity in its most beautiful form."

Rimac hopes that, no matter what changes in legislation occur in the coming years, enthusiasts like him will still be allowed to drive internal-combustion-engine cars for enjoyment. But he also thinks that, in not much more than a decade, most people won't own a car—a view seemingly at odds with his business model. "It's a very controversial topic," he said. "It's kind of like saying people will not eat meat in ten years." Soon, he predicted, convenient alternatives to car ownership will exist: shared cars, driverless cars. Rimac is the founder of a European robo-taxi startup. When such options exist, and have been made truly affordable through economies of scale, "who will go through the pain of having a car?"



He continued, "My parents still had horses. And it's not like you *cannot* have a horse today. It's just a question of allocating the time and energy and money—do you really want to buy a horse? It will be the same with cars. Look rationally at it. It's the second-biggest expense in your life, after your house. And you have to worry about it—where you park it, when you service it. So I think most people will choose not to own a car." (Rimac and Christian von Koenigsegg recently took part in a discussion about this issue on "Top Gear," and von Koenigsegg said, "Human beings are not rational. People like to *own* things.")

Before leaving Croatia, I drove the Nevera on a private track near the airport. It had rained overnight, and the tarmac was slippery. Rimac's chief test-driver, Miro Zrnčević, showed off some of the Nevera's qualities. It accelerates faster than any road car ever made: zero to 60 m.p.h. in 1.74 seconds, and zero to a hundred in 3.21 seconds. By now, I was used to the power of hypercars, but it was my first time experiencing such power so noiselessly. When Zrnčević accelerated from a standing start, my brain struggled to align the speed we accumulated with the near-silence around us. I nearly threw up.

Gordon Murray, the designer of the McLaren F1, has said that "an electric car can't give you all the emotional stuff." When it was my turn to drive the Nevera, I may not have felt deep emotion, but I did experience fun. There was a playfulness to the design. Each wheel on the Nevera is powered by its own electric motor. If you switch the car to Drift Mode, the front motors disconnect, causing you to skid around corners, often in a haze of tire smoke. Once, at Zrnčević's suggestion, I hit Drift Mode and did doughnuts in the center of the private track, pointlessly. In Track Mode, where the steering is designed to be more precise, I accidentally hit a puddle and spun out of control, braking just before a grassy run-off area. "Nice reactions," Zrnčević said.

With only ninety minutes until my flight home, Zrnčević suggested that I drive the Nevera to the airport. If I'd been driving a Lamborghini or a Bugatti, the engine would have been roaring at low speeds, causing a stir at the departures terminal. The noiseless Rimac barely drew a glance. I wondered how many people who had paid two million dollars for a hypercar would have been content with being so ignored. Happily, I would never have to wrestle with that conundrum. I parked illegally, in a taxi stand outside the terminal, and ran for my plane. ♦

GREETINGS, FRIENDS!

Light up the tree! The front porch, too!
Let reindeer'd Santa, shiny-new,
Blink off and on upon the rooftop,
From rosy cheek to tiny hoof-top.
Here's Chevy Chase to plug him in;
Wow, that looks great! And so begin
The joyous rounds of raucous greetings
Customary at these meetings.
Shawn Fain, of the U.A.W.,
We hope it will not too much trouble you
If we aver our admiration
Mingled with a strong elation
At your uplifting win. You rule!
What you all did was extra cool.
Three cheers for Teamster Sean O'Brien,
Whose coolness likewise we're implyin'.
Lisa Takeuchi Cullen,
We are now happily mullin'
How we will praise your W.G.A. East
At our impending solstice feast,
And shout "Brava!" for bold Fran Drescher,
SAG-AFTRA graceful under pressure.
Our salutations list is long,
And filled with a distinguished throng:
Flaco the Owl, of Central Park,
"To-whoo" the herald angels hark,
We wish him nights of happy ratting
While human owls are Santa-hatting.
All life-forms, do not be annoyed
If we shout-out the asteroid
Known as Bennu that flies right by us,
Now and then as if to try us,
Wond'ring if we're still awake.
What a tsuris he would make
If he chose to nearer veer!
We wish him New Years far from here.
Joyeux Noël, Markquis Nowell!
Your alley-oop play went so well
You fooled us all! And what delight,
The way you rocked the game that night.
In re General Mark Milley,
Though it may seem a trifle silly,
The Grand Theft Auto V we got him,
Not knowing what else we could've bought him,
Might please a guy who wants to chill
Upon this eve so deep and still.
To fête Steve Reich and Gerwig (Greta),
We send them each a bright poinsett'a;
For M. Cardona, Sec. of Ed.,
Some blooms of even bolder red,
With more of same for Stephanie Foo,
Wichita's Mayor Lily Wu,
Robin Arzón, the fitness star,
And Aabria Iyengar.
This year we're baking gifts, and so
Some meta-lebkuchen will go
To Connie Schultz and Sherrod Brown,
Vin Diesel, who ain't slowin' down,
Dolores Huerta, sage of labor,
Julia Melville, super neighbor,
Connie Chung, Jesús Molina,
Doja Cat, and Barney (Tina).
These pfeffernuesse, Louie Zong,
You're gonna love (if we're not wrong).
Our maple-cream-filled Linzer cookies
Will please (we hope) M.L.B. rookies
Eury Pérez, Marlins pitcher,
Corbin Carroll, soon to be richer,
Tanner Bibee, Guardians righty,
And Gunnar Henderson, the mighty.
But, wait—we're burying the lede!
All flour-covered, we proceed
To kvell about who's just arrived:
The class of two-oh-forty-five!
Marisol Tolentino Daley,
We celebrate your here-ness gaily!
Benjamin Gabriel Schwartz Blitzer,
Your *Zimtsterne* get an extra spritz, sir!
We'll jump and shout and get grandstand-y
For Gia Khullar and Hauser (Sandy);
Charles F. MacLaughlin, glad to know you!
Atlas J. Katz, the studies show you
Lighten hearts for all who meet you!
Theo Yaffa, thrilled to greet you
At the "Greetings, Friends!" pavilion!
Alice Rothman, thanks a million
For arriving on the planet!
And August Michael Han, it
Joys us much that you are present.
It is also highly pleasant
To welcome Nicolás Kortava-Osorio,
And sing a gladsome oratorio
For Max James Henderson's début
And Oscar Frazier Coburn's, too!
So set the Veuve Clicquot a-fizzin',
Watch the old year wilt and wizen.
Dark though things have been, keep going—
Faith has got a way of growing.
Hope takes work, let us not rest,
Ever blessing, ever blest.

—*Ian Frazier*

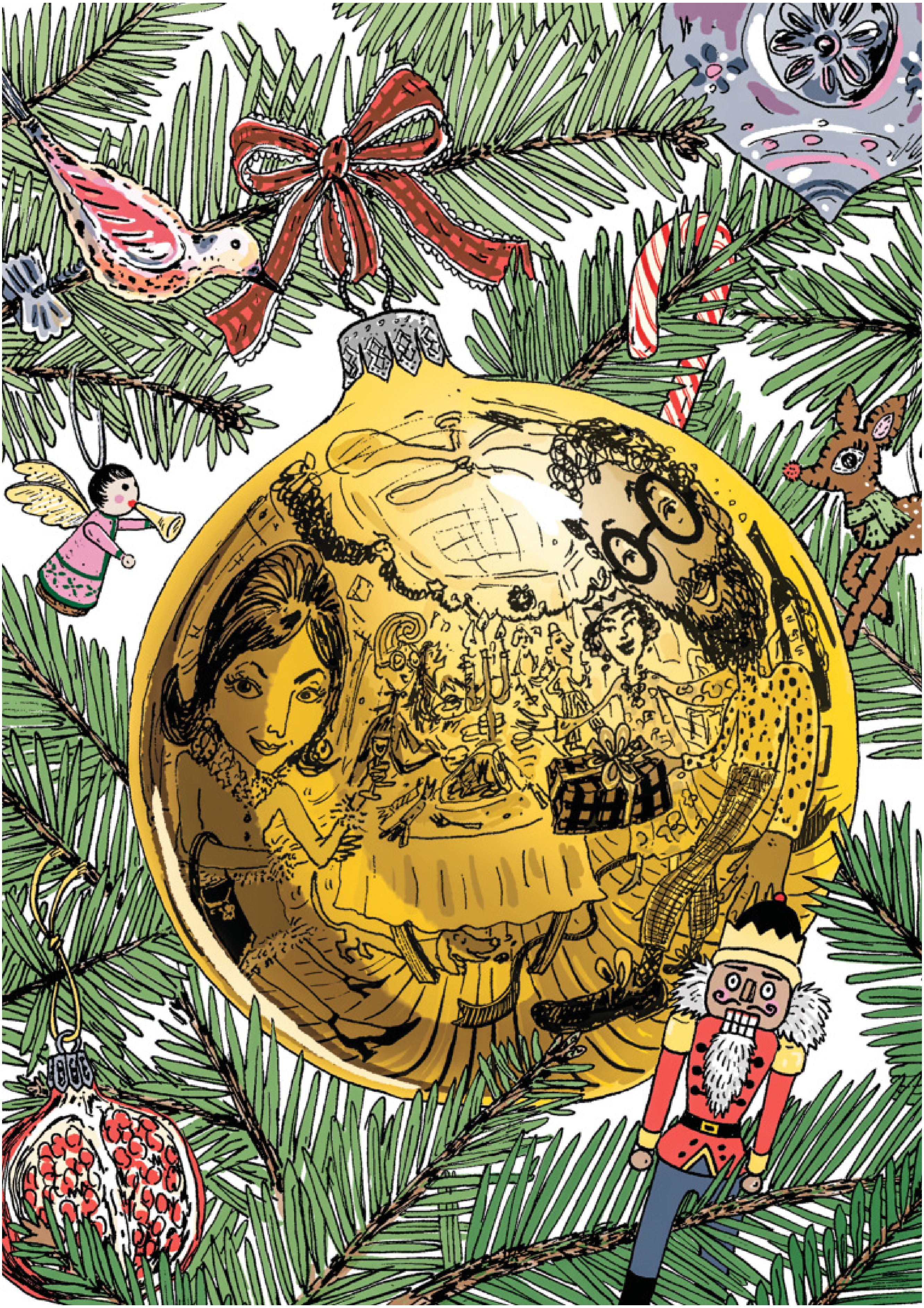
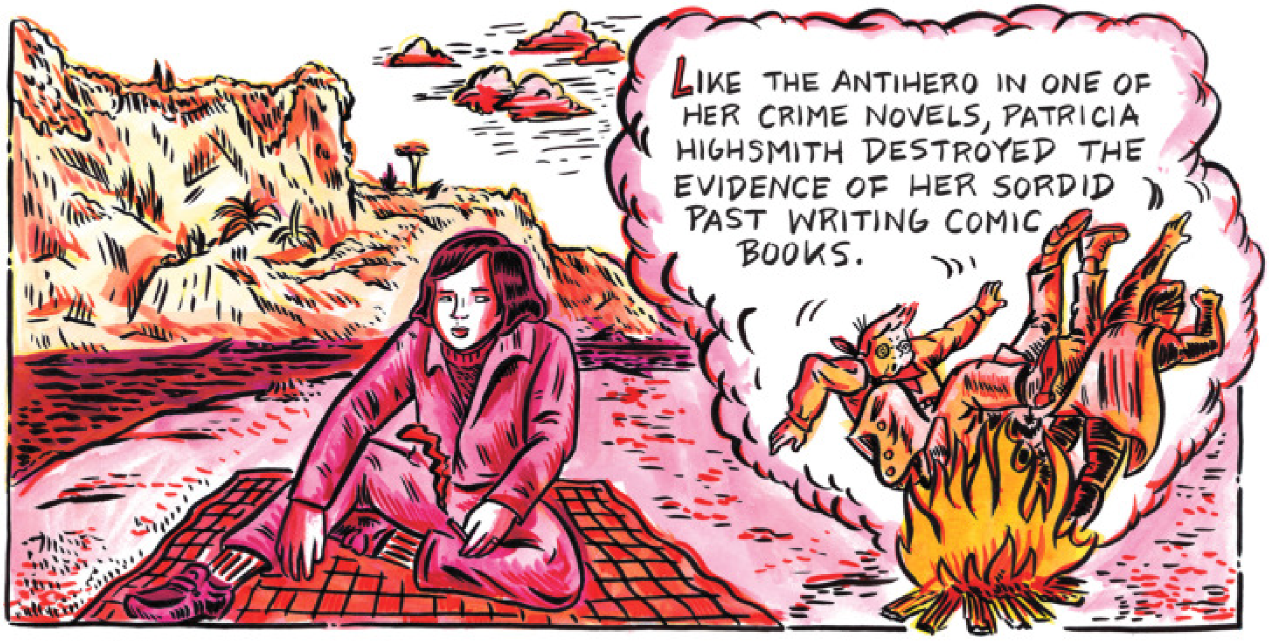
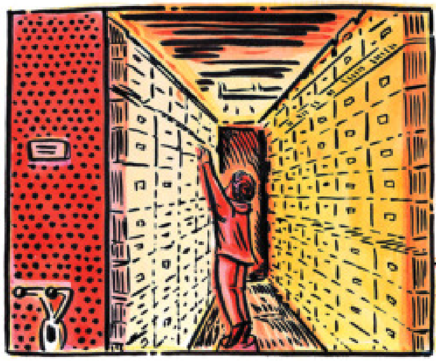


ILLUSTRATION BY JOANA AVILLEZ

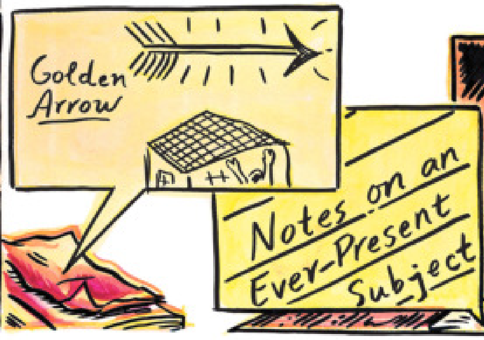
VANISHING PANELS BY ALI FITZGERALD


LIKE THE ANTIHERO IN ONE OF HER CRIME NOVELS, PATRICIA HIGHSMITH DESTROYED THE EVIDENCE OF HER SORDID PAST WRITING COMIC BOOKS.

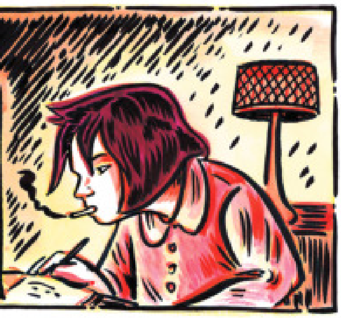
SIFTING THROUGH CAHIERS IN A SWISS ARCHIVE, HIGHSMITH'S BIOGRAPHER, JOAN SCHENKAR, FOUND NO TRACES OF HER COMIC SCRIPTS.



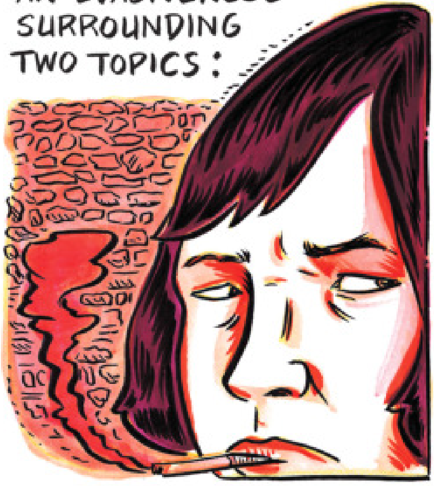
ONLY ONE COMIC NOTATION SURVIVED HIGHSMITH'S PURGE, HAVING BEEN WEDGED INTO A BOOK AND LEFT WITH A FRIEND.


Golden Arrow
Notes on an Ever-Present Subject

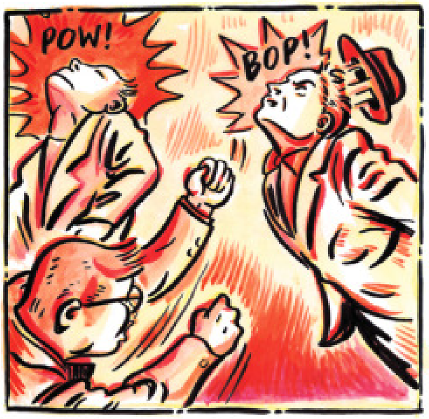
A PROLIFIC DIARIST, HIGHSMITH CATALOGUED HER GRUDGES AND LOVE AFFAIRS IN VIVID DETAIL, FILING ALL THINGS HOMOSEXUAL UNDER THE ACRONYM **NOEPS**.



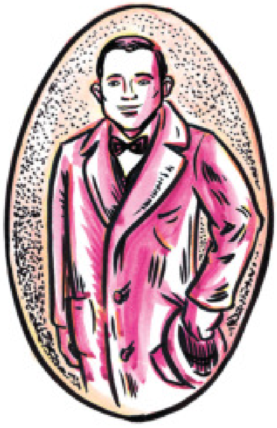
BUT SCHENKAR NOTES AN EVASIVENESS SURROUNDING TWO TOPICS:



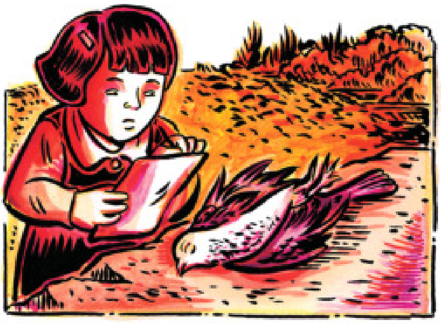
HER SEVEN-YEAR STINT WRITING SUPERHERO COMICS,



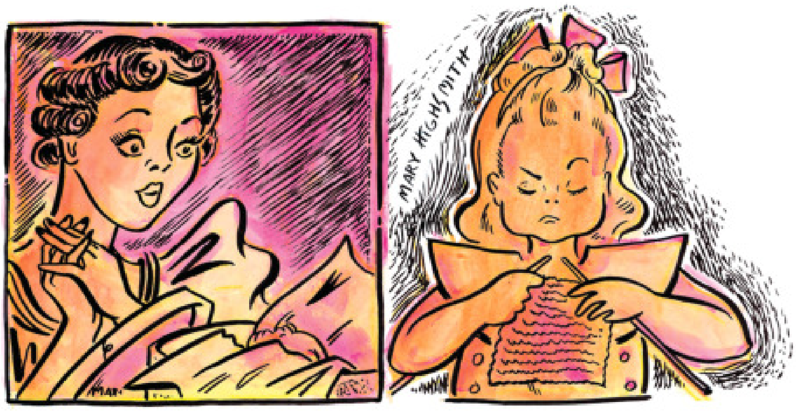
AND HER BIOLOGICAL FATHER, JAY B. PLANGMAN.



YOUNG PATSY HIGHSMITH GREW UP IMMERSED IN THE LANGUAGES OF DRAWING AND LOSS.



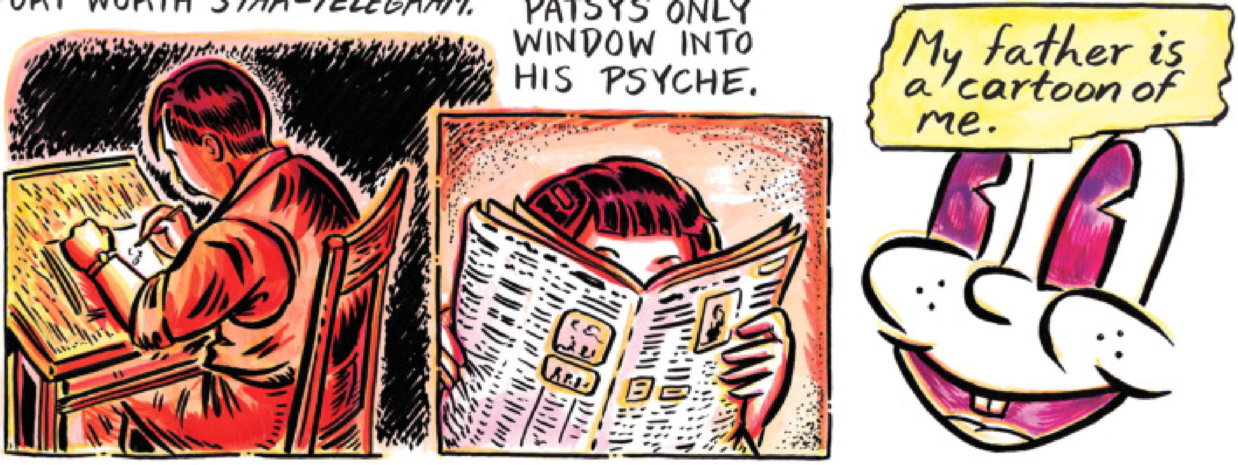
HER MOTHER—WHOM SHE BLAMED FOR ABANDONING HER FOR A YEAR IN CHILDHOOD—WAS AN ILLUSTRATOR.



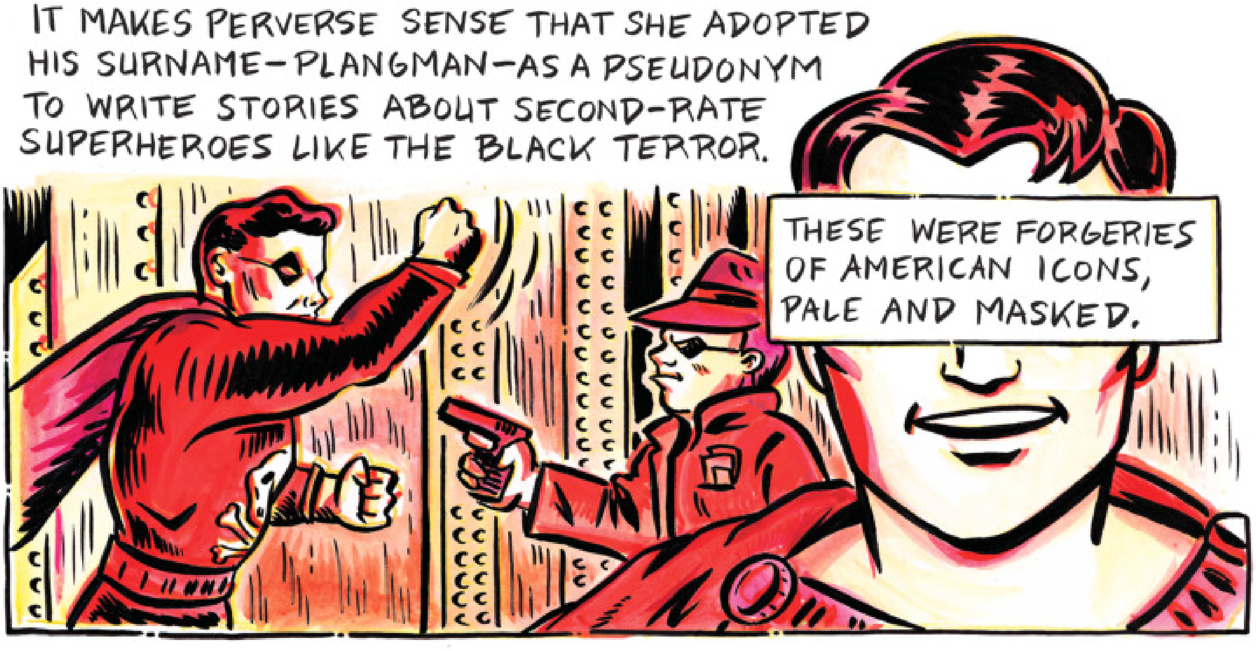
HER BIOLOGICAL FATHER, SHADOWY AND ABSENT, DREW CARTOONS FOR THE FORT WORTH *STAR-TELEGRAM*.

IT'S POSSIBLE THAT THESE PRINTED SQUARES WERE PATSY'S ONLY WINDOW INTO HIS PSYCHE.

IN ONE TEEN-AGE NOTEBOOK, SHE WRITES CRYPTICALLY:

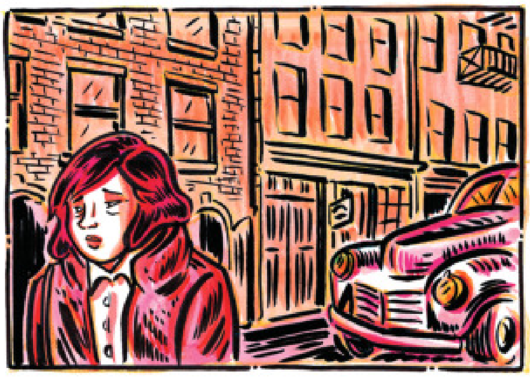

My father is a cartoon of me.

IT MAKES PERVERSE SENSE THAT SHE ADOPTED HIS SURNAME—PLANGMAN—AS A PSEUDONYM TO WRITE STORIES ABOUT SECOND-RATE SUPERHEROES LIKE THE BLACK TERROR.



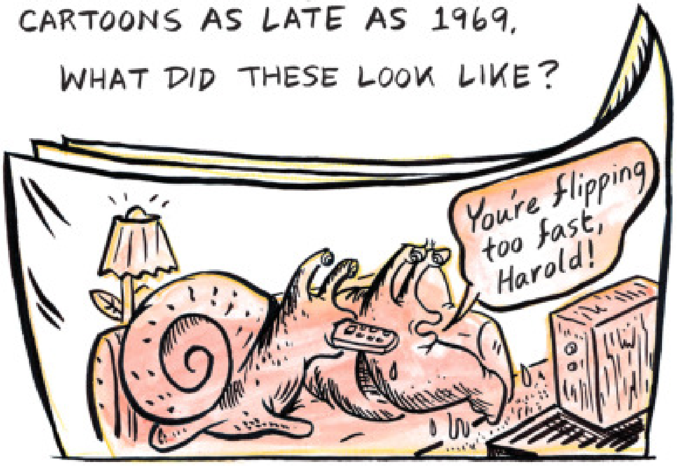
THESE WERE FORGERIES OF AMERICAN ICONS, PALE AND MASKED.

HIGHSMITH'S CAREER IN COMICS STARTED AFTER A BOUT OF REJECTIONS FROM "QUALITY" MAGAZINES LIKE *VOGUE* AND *THE NEW YORKER**.

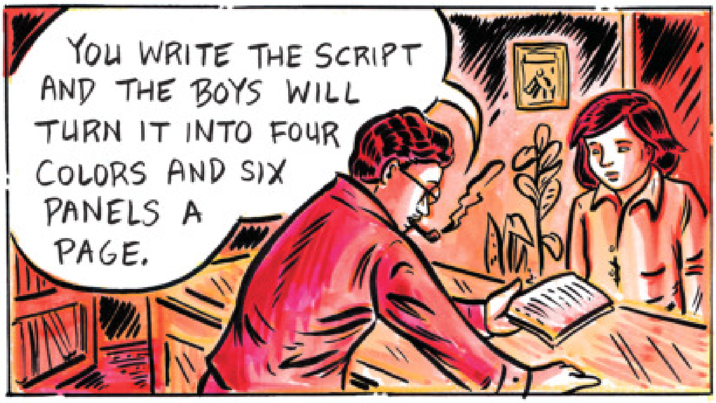


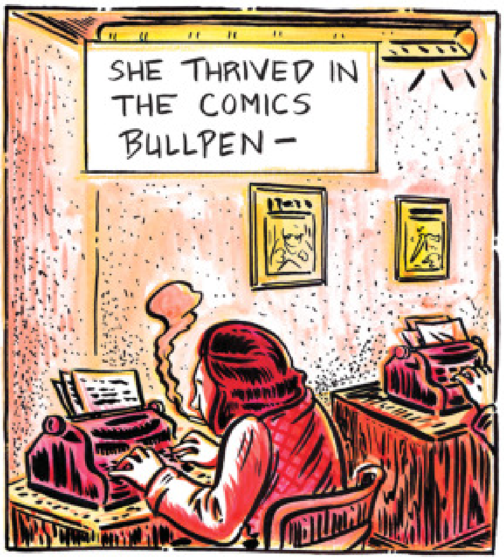
*SHE WOULD CONTINUE BEING REJECTED BY *THE NEW YORKER* FOR MUCH OF HER LIFE, SUBMITTING CARTOONS AS LATE AS 1969.

WHAT DID THESE LOOK LIKE?

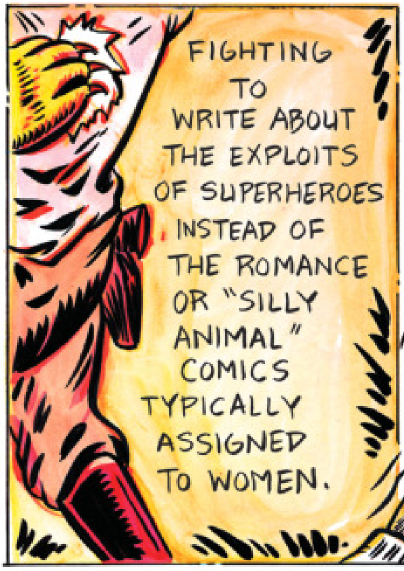

You're flipping too fast, Harold!

HIGHSMITH BEGAN WORKING AT SANGOR-PINES COMICS IN 1942. A WRITER COULD MAKE DECENT MONEY IN WARTIME NEW YORK IN THE BOOMING INDUSTRY.


YOU WRITE THE SCRIPT AND THE BOYS WILL TURN IT INTO FOUR COLORS AND SIX PANELS A PAGE.

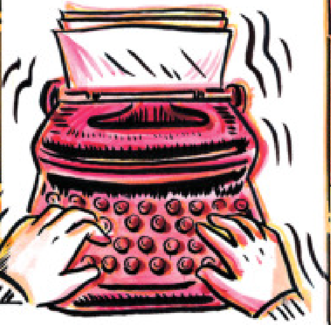


SHE THRIVED IN THE COMICS BULLPEN—

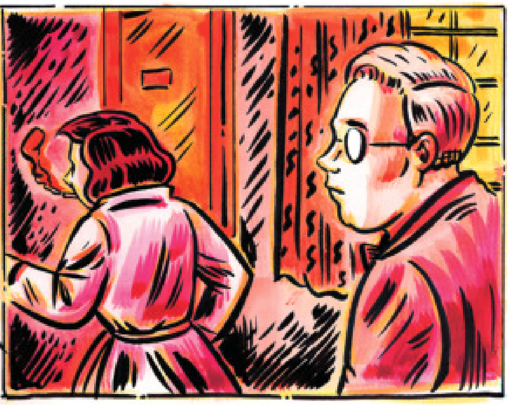


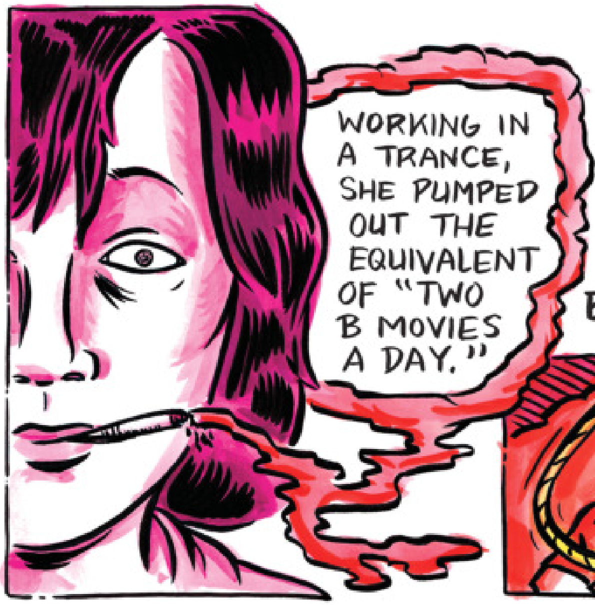
FIGHTING TO WRITE ABOUT THE EXPLOITS OF SUPERHEROES INSTEAD OF THE ROMANCE OR "SILLY ANIMAL" COMICS TYPICALLY ASSIGNED TO WOMEN.

SHE TYPED OUT SCRIPTS FURIOUSLY, STOPPING ONLY TO LIGHT A CIGARETTE OR DRINK COFFEE—



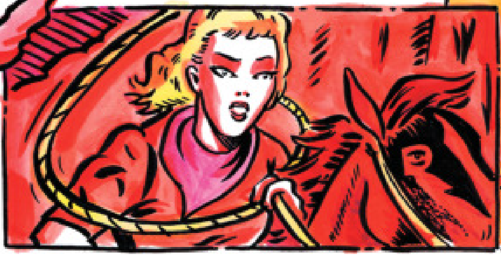
IGNORING FLIRTATIOUS ADVANCES FROM CO-WORKERS AND SHRUGGING OFF A DATE WITH STAN LEE.



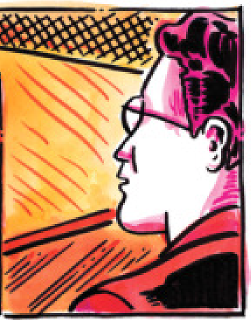

WORKING IN A TRANCE, SHE PUMPED OUT THE EQUIVALENT OF "TWO B MOVIES A DAY."

WE CAN SPOT PROTO-HIGHSMITH OBSESSIONS CONGEALING BETWEEN THESE PANEL GUTTERS:

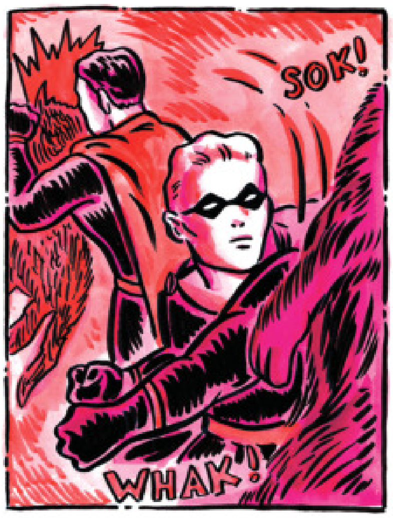
BUTCH HEIRESSES



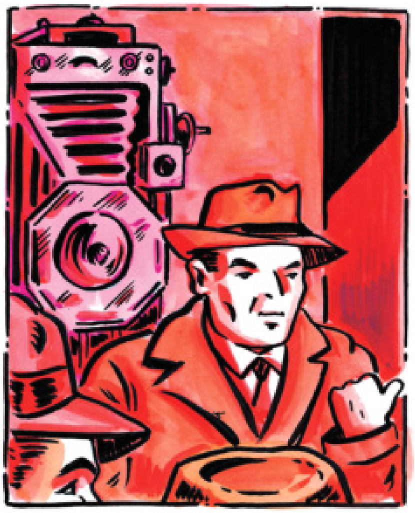
EMASCULATED ALTER EGOS



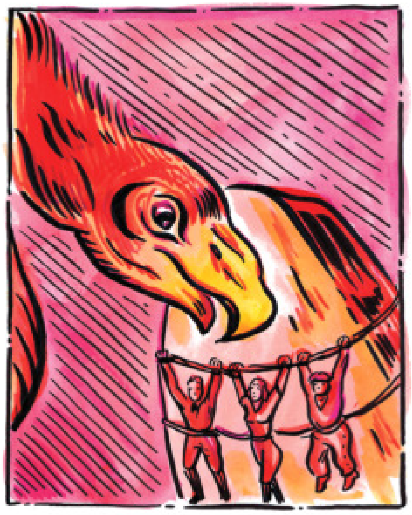
HOMOEROTIC APPRENTICESHIPS



DUPLICATION DEVICES

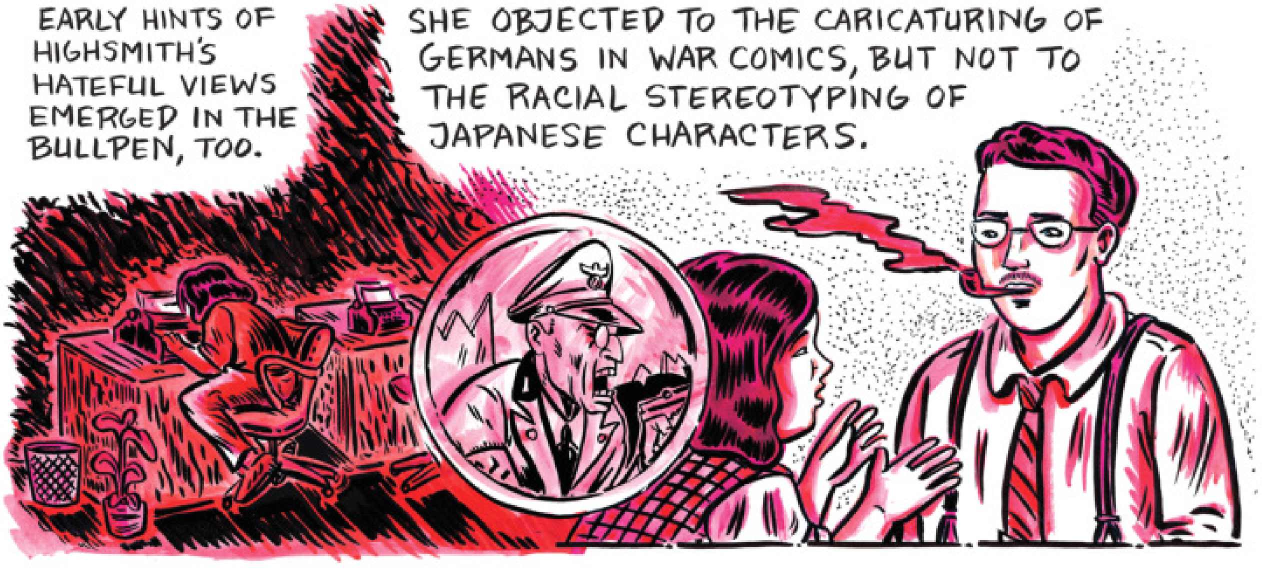


AND VENGEFUL ANIMALS.

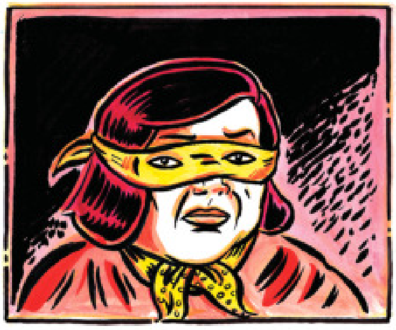


EARLY HINTS OF HIGHSMITH'S HATEFUL VIEWS EMERGED IN THE BULLPEN, TOO.

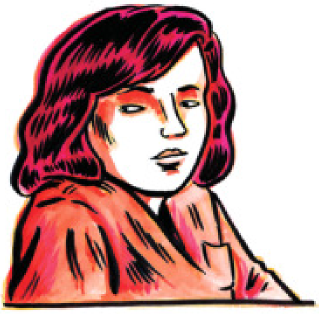
SHE OBJECTED TO THE CARICATURING OF GERMANS IN WAR COMICS, BUT NOT TO THE RACIAL STEREOTYPING OF JAPANESE CHARACTERS.



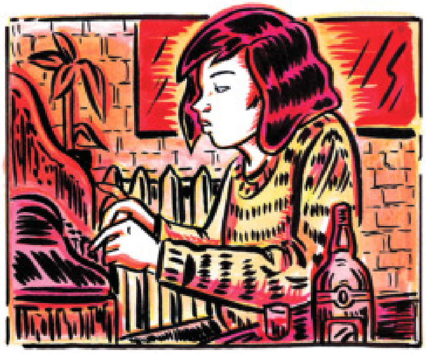
THIS IS OUR INTRODUCTION TO HIGHSMITH THE EMBITTERED VILLAIN, AN ALTER EGO SHE WOULD CULTIVATE UNTIL HER DEATH.



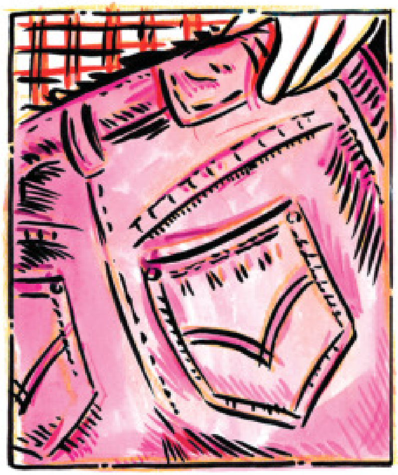
IN THE NINETEEN-FORTIES, SHE HAD OTHER PERSONAS, LIKE MARY PLANGMAN, QUIET COMIC SCRIPTWRITER.



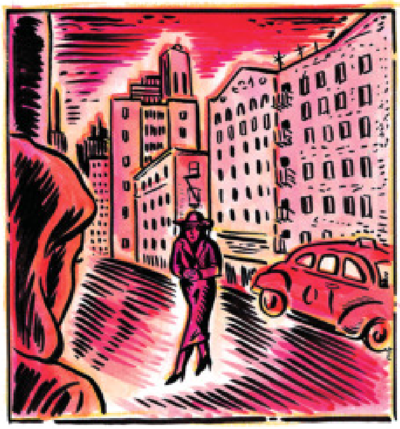
AT NIGHT, SHE WAS THE NOVELIST PATRICIA HIGHSMITH, DEVISING ELABORATE PLOTS WHILE DRINKING.



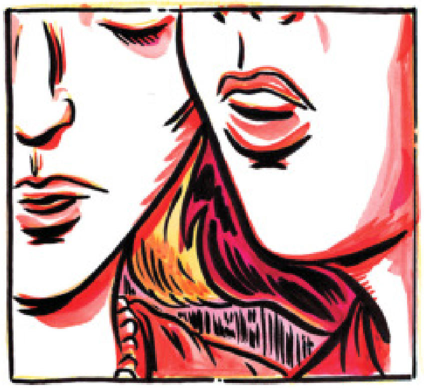
SHE WAS ALSO "PAT," A LADY-KILLER IN IRONED LEVI'S.



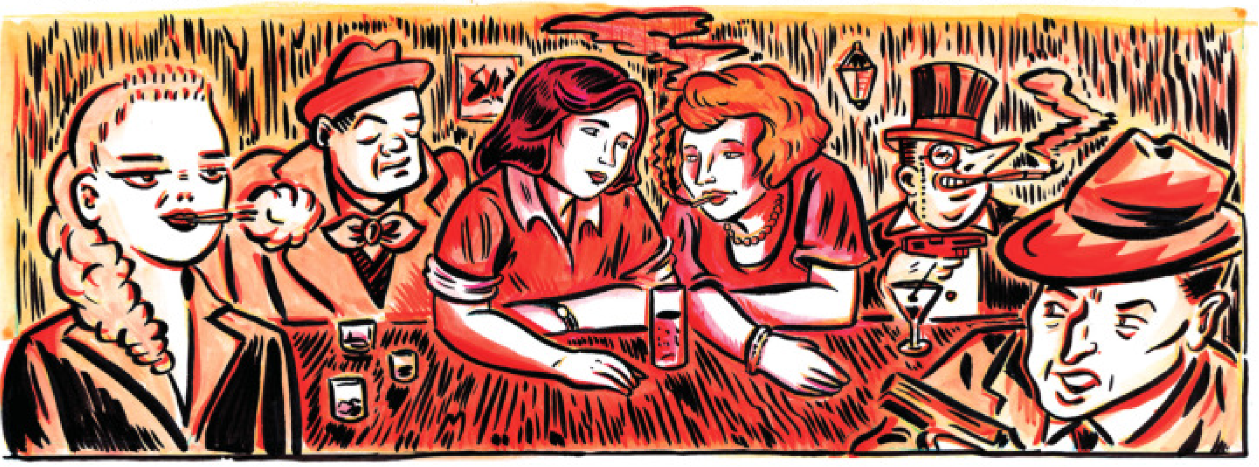
PAT ENJOYED STALKING GRETA GARBO ON THE UPPER EAST SIDE.



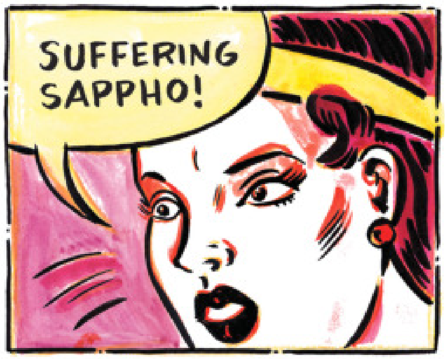
AND SEEKING OUT LIAISONS IN GAY BARS WHEN HOMOSEXUALITY WAS STILL A CRIME.



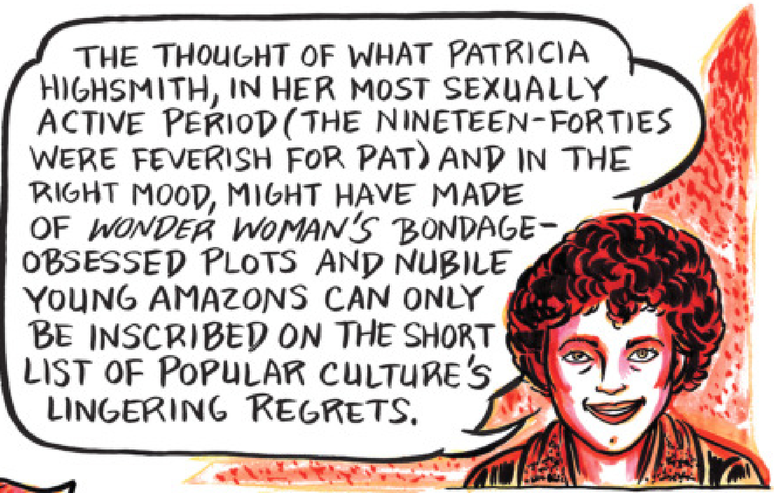
IN A DARK CORNER OF MARIE'S CRISIS, A BAR IN THE WEST VILLAGE, DID PAT FEEL A KINSHIP WITH THE LOWLIFES, CROOKS, AND MOB BOSSES THAT POPULATED THE WORLD OF THE COMICS?

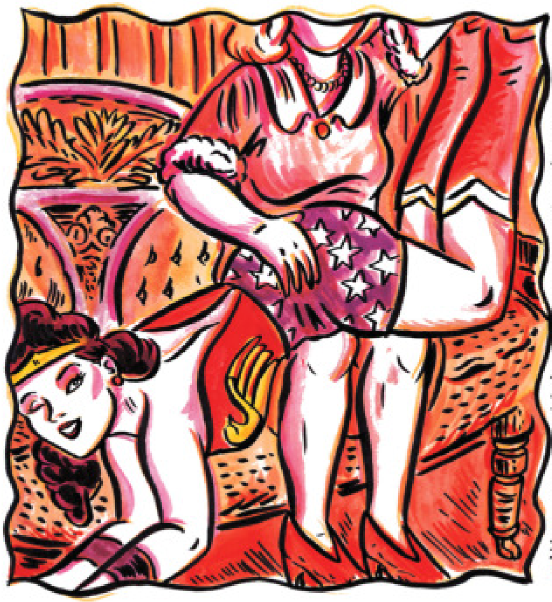


IN 1947, HIGHSMITH LOBBIED, UNSUCCESSFULLY, TO WRITE FOR THE POPULAR COMIC *WONDER WOMAN*.

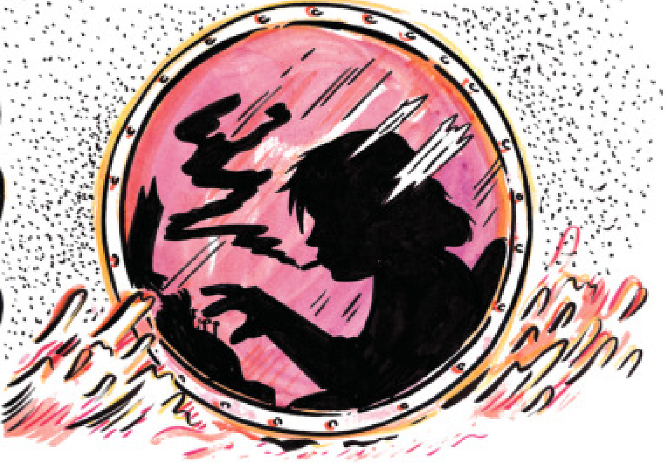

SUFFERING SAPPHO!

JOAN SCHENKAR WRITES:


THE THOUGHT OF WHAT PATRICIA HIGHSMITH, IN HER MOST SEXUALLY ACTIVE PERIOD (THE NINETEEN-FORTIES WERE FEVERISH FOR PAT) AND IN THE RIGHT MOOD, MIGHT HAVE MADE OF *WONDER WOMAN'S* BONDAGE-OBSESSED PLOTS AND NUBILE YOUNG AMAZONS CAN ONLY BE INSCRIBED ON THE SHORT LIST OF POPULAR CULTURE'S LINGERING REGRETS.

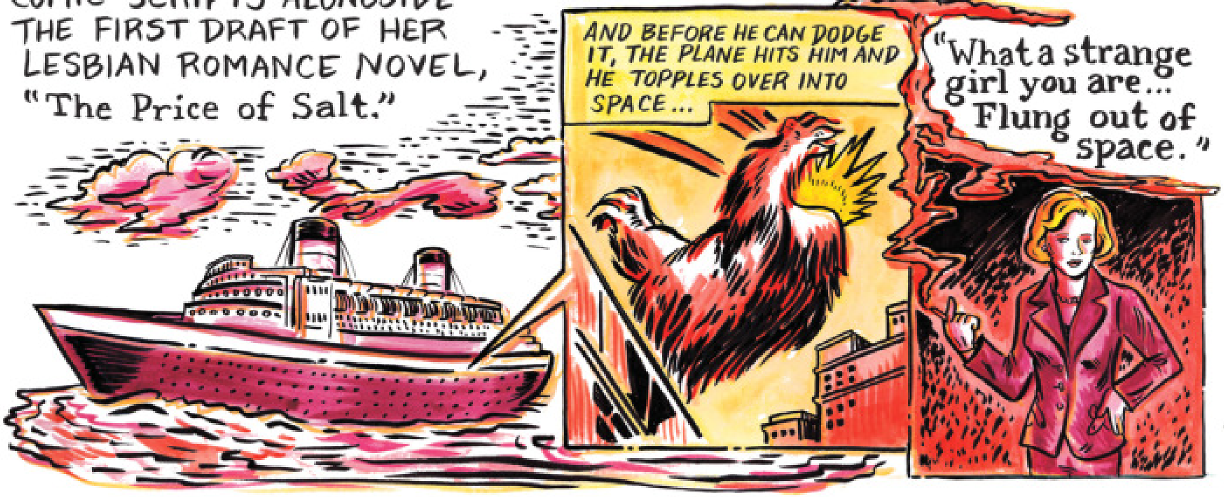


BY 1949, HIGHSMITH WAS A ROVING FREELANCER.



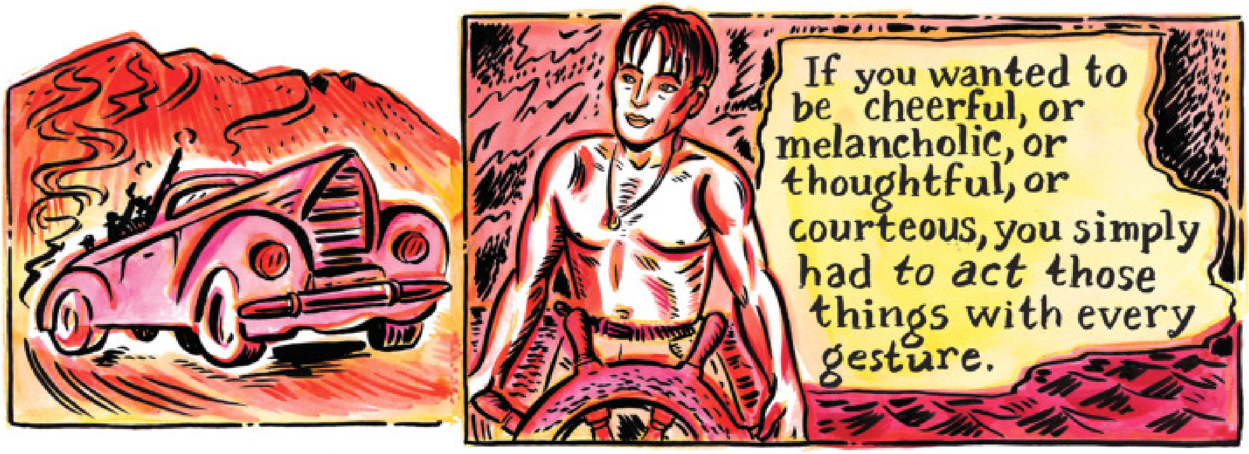
ON OCEAN LINERS CROSSING THE ATLANTIC, SHE TYPED OUT COMIC SCRIPTS ALONGSIDE THE FIRST DRAFT OF HER LESBIAN ROMANCE NOVEL, "The Price of Salt."

DID THE NARRATIVES OVERLAP, INTERTWINE?

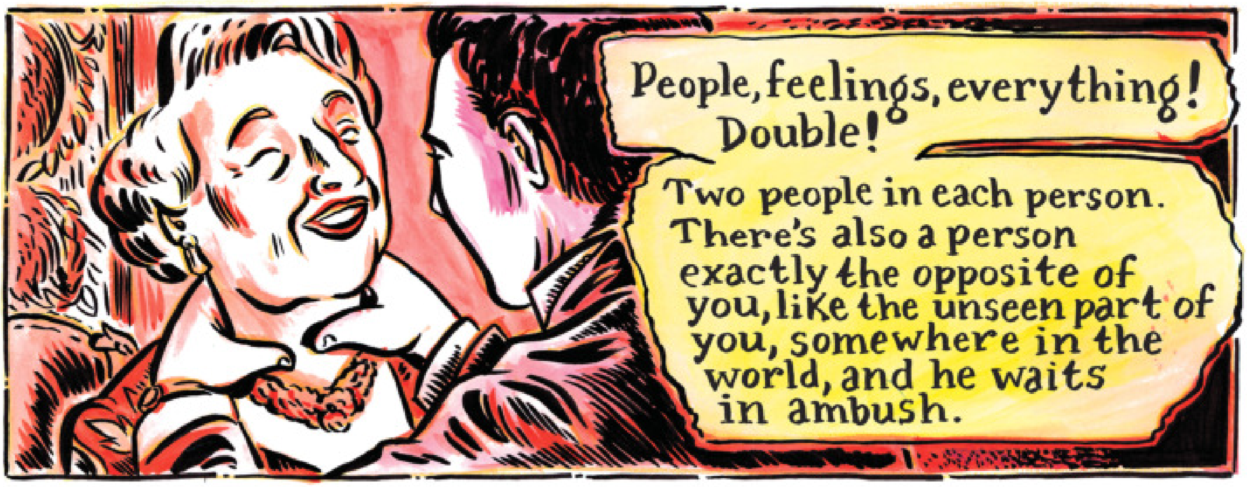

AND BEFORE HE CAN DODGE IT, THE PLANE HITS HIM AND HE TOPPLES OVER INTO SPACE...
"What a strange girl you are... Flung out of space."

COMIC-Y OUTLINES SNAKE ACROSS HIGHSMITH'S FICTION.

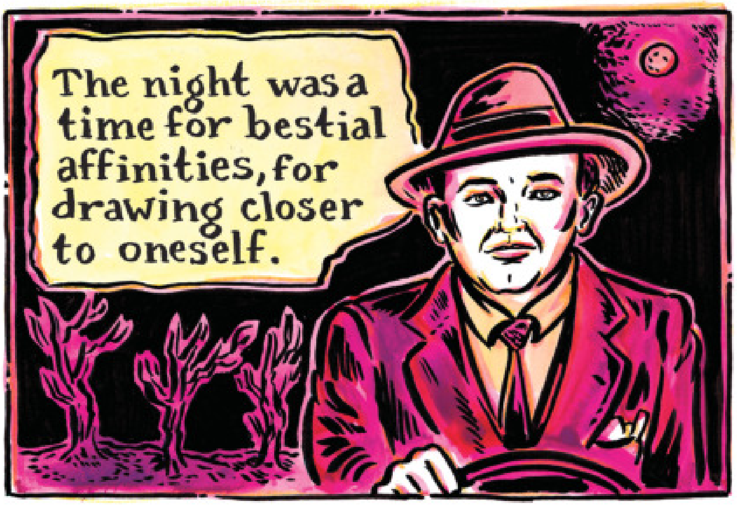
HER WORLDS ARE VISUAL, FULL OF TRANSFORMATIONS, COSTUME CHANGES, AND FORGERIES.

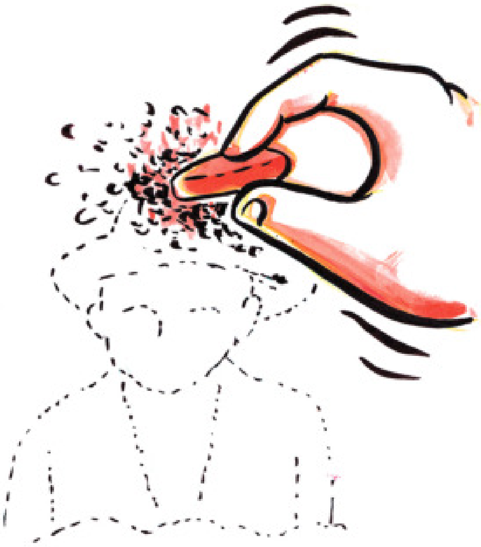

If you wanted to be cheerful, or melancholic, or thoughtful, or courteous, you simply had *to act* those things with every gesture.

FLOWERY PROSE FALLS AWAY AS WE BECOME COMPLICIT, UNNERVED.


People, feelings, everything! Double!
Two people in each person. There's also a person exactly the opposite of you, like the unseen part of you, somewhere in the world, and he waits in ambush.

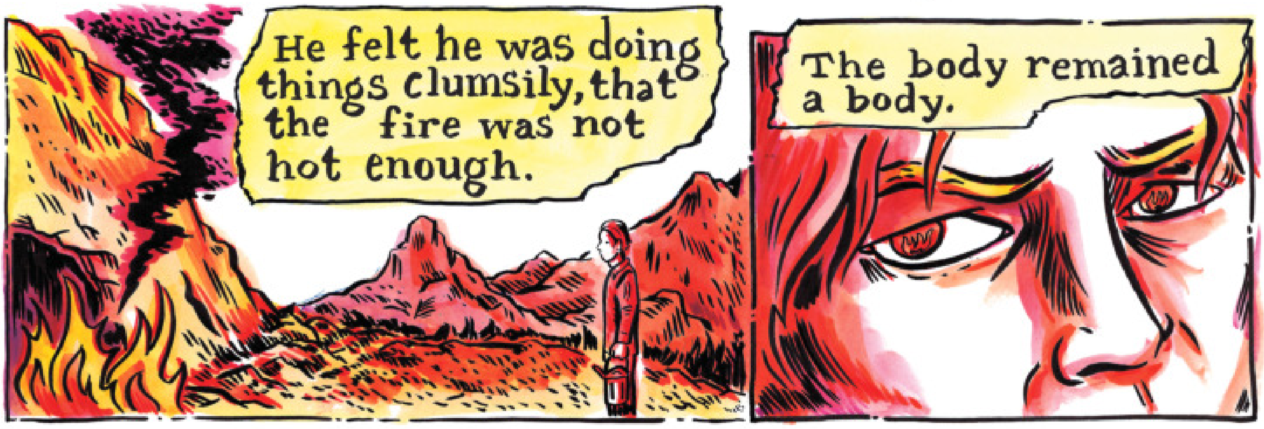
THE GHASTLY AND THE MACABRE FUSE WITH MORE MUNDANE EVILS.


The night was a time for bestial affinities, for drawing closer to oneself.



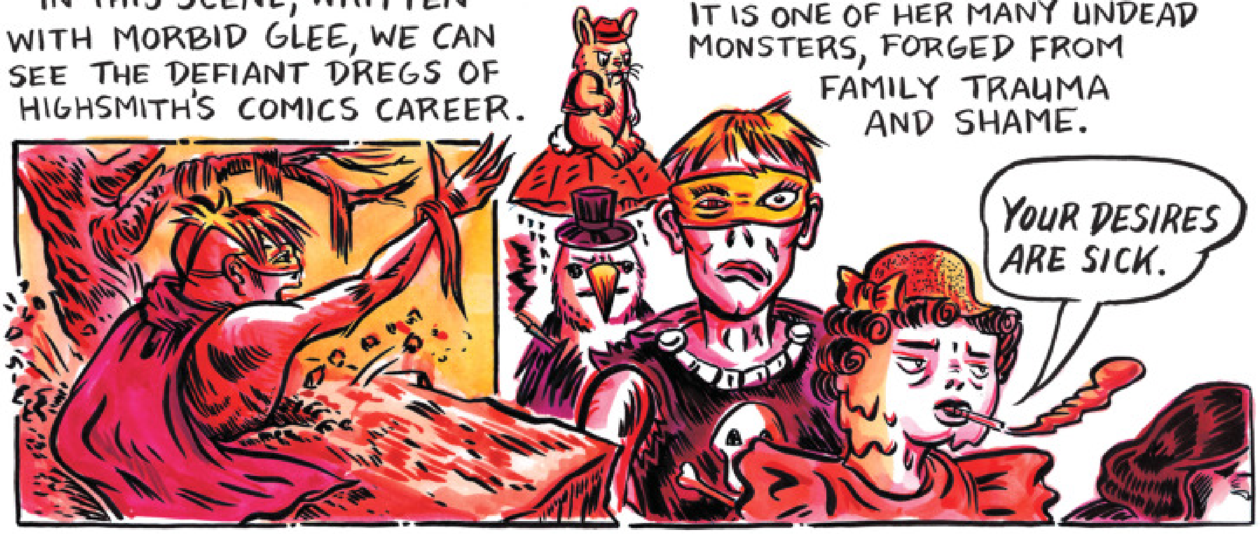
IN "Ripley Under Ground," HIGHSMITH'S TITULAR PSYCHOPATH STRUGGLES TO BURN A BODY.

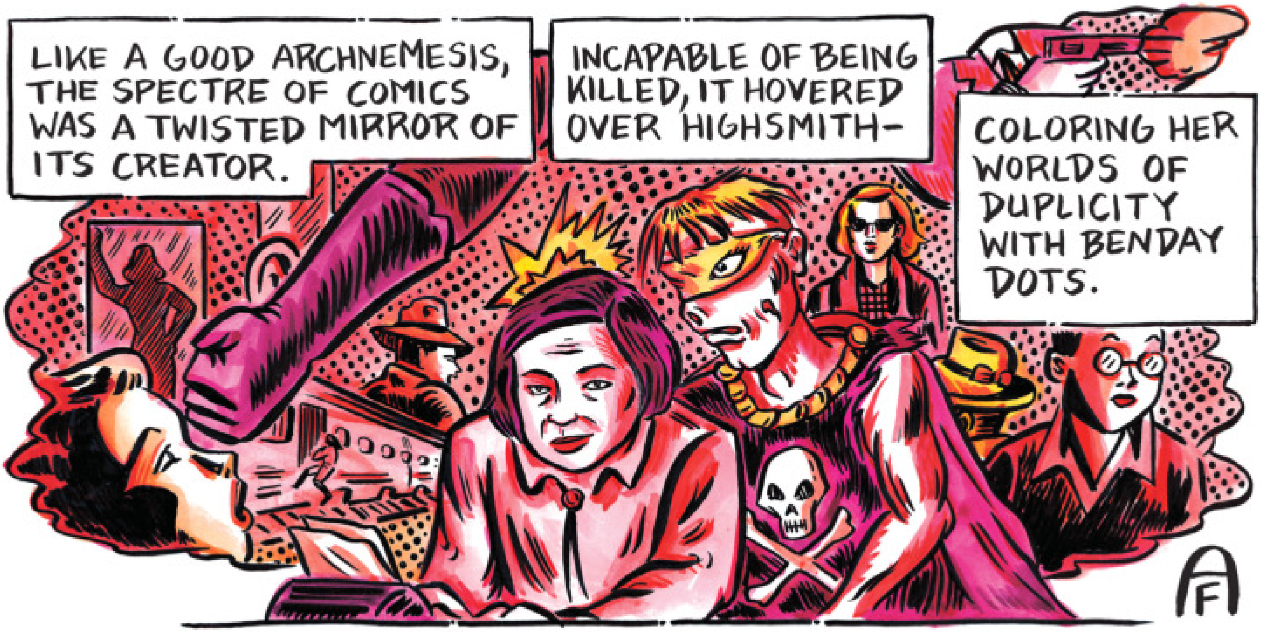
RIPLEY IS ANXIOUS, EAGER FOR THE CORPSE TO BREAK DOWN.


He felt he was doing things clumsily, that the fire was not hot enough.
The body remained a body.

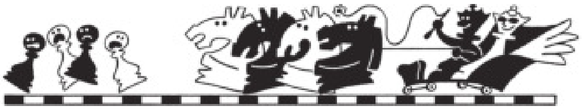
IN THIS SCENE, WRITTEN WITH MORBID GLEE, WE CAN SEE THE DEFIANT DREGS OF HIGHSMITH'S COMICS CAREER.

IT IS ONE OF HER MANY UNDEAD MONSTERS, FORGED FROM FAMILY TRAUMA AND SHAME.


YOUR DESIRES ARE SICK.


LIKE A GOOD ARCHNEMESIS, THE SPECTRE OF COMICS WAS A TWISTED MIRROR OF ITS CREATOR.
INCAPABLE OF BEING KILLED, IT HOVERED OVER HIGHSMITH—
COLORING HER WORLDS OF DUPLICITY WITH BENDAY DOTS.
AF

THE CRITICS



A CRITIC AT LARGE

FAMILY MATTERS

Am I one of the last living relatives of Bruno Schulz?

BY KATHRYN SCHULZ

Strange things are happening up in the sky. First, a windstorm blows in, so powerful that roof after roof is torn from its joists and sails off into the night; the few brave souls who venture outdoors fill their pockets with iron and brass to keep from being swept away. No sooner does the gale die down than a flock of wild birds materializes overhead—“wild” not only because they are untamed but also because they are outlandish. Some fly upside down; others have dense, tangled fur, like bison; still others have no bodies at all, only magnificently ornamented tails, like peacocks. After the birds, a comet appears on the far edge of the firmament, destined by its trajectory to destroy our planet. Every night, people gather to gape at it, and, every night, the sky across which it courses grows less familiar and more dazzling—filled with distant nebulae and exploding suns and roamed by the constellations, as if they have finally been freed from their ancient curses.

Where did all these aerial wonders come from? The short answer is the imagination of Bruno Schulz, a Polish Jew, born and raised in the town of Drohobycz, who was murdered by the Nazis in 1942. The long answer does not exist, because it is the deep, unanswerable question of literature: under what circumstances, by what unrepeatable concatenation of history, biology, and psyche, does the human mind come to produce such things? One way to measure the originality of artists is by how acutely they provoke this question. By that metric, Bruno Schulz was a genius, albeit one belonging to that special subcategory known as the writer’s writer, the kind whose brilliance is most evident to his peers. Susan Sontag, Philip Roth, and Czeslaw Milosz all admired him lavishly; John Updike called him “one of the great transmogrifiers of the world into words”; Isaac Bashevis Singer regarded him as “one of the most remarkable writers who ever lived”; and the Nobel Prize-winning Polish novelist Olga Tokarczuk confessed to loving Schulz but also to hating him, because no one could ever displace him as the supreme virtuoso of Polish fiction. Yet in the broader literary culture Schulz remains a marginal figure, the kind whose star, unlike the ones he wrote about, does nothing dramatic. It neither rises nor falls, brightens nor dims; it is simply up there, still blazing with its own past light, whenever someone bothers to look at it.

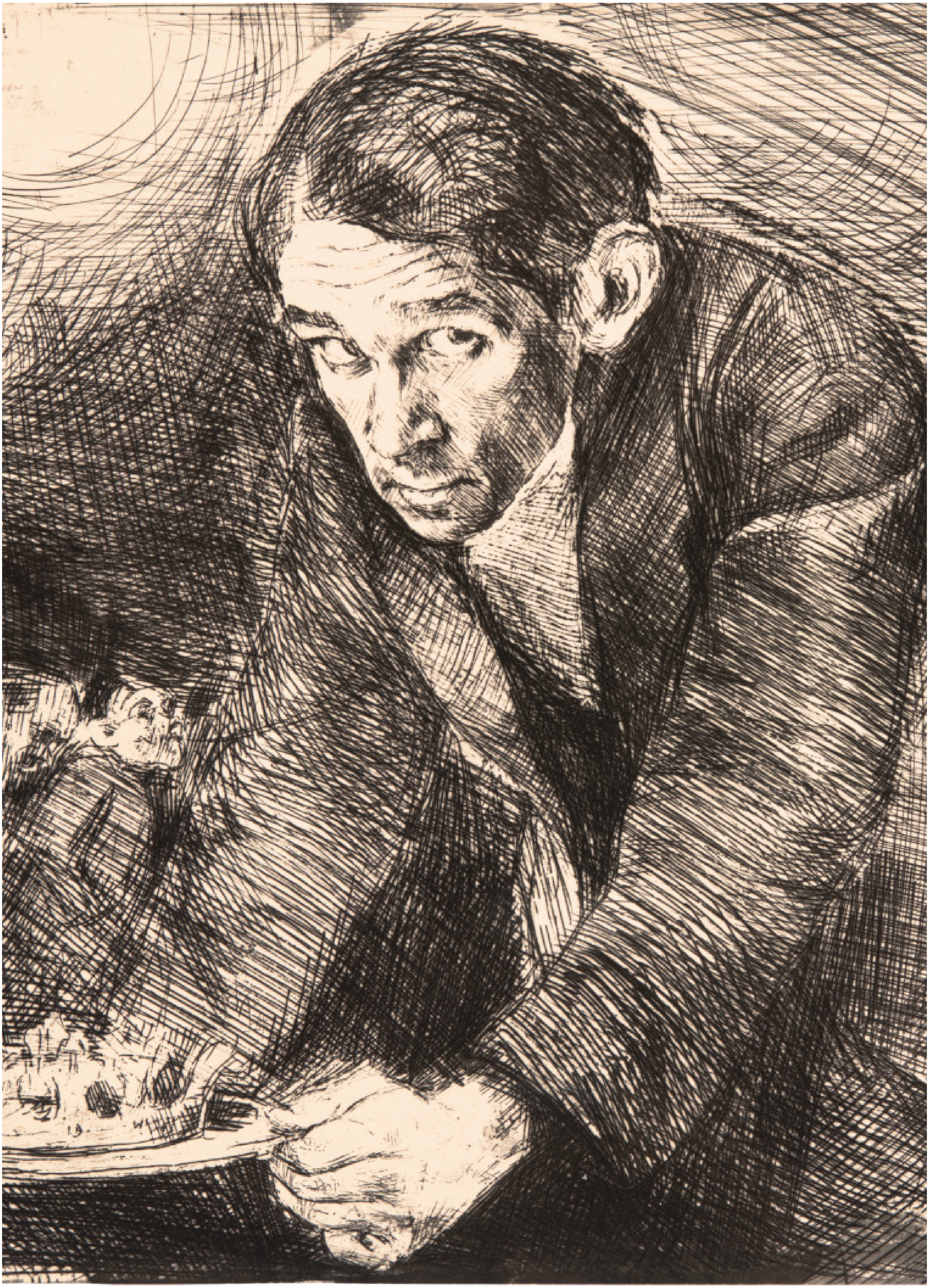
I have been one of those stargazers since my late teens, which is why, earlier this year, I picked up a new biography of Schulz, the first one written in English: Benjamin Balint’s “Bruno Schulz: An Artist, a Murder, and the Hijacking of History” (Norton). I like biographies and have read plenty of them. But I’ve never before read one that caused me to bolt upright midway through, as if its subject had just come back from the dead.

The jolt came while reading Balint’s account of a story about the Polish poet Jerzy Ficowski, who wrote the first and still definitive biography of Schulz, “Regions of the Great Heresy.” Ficowski was eighteen when he sent a fan letter to Schulz, not knowing that the address would not work because his literary idol had been consigned to a Jewish ghetto and was months from being murdered; after the war, Ficowski began a lifelong quest to track down every surviving scrap of Schulziana. The white whale of that search was a draft of “Messiah,” a novel Schulz worked on from 1934 until the year before he died, when, aware of his likely fate, he wrapped it up in a package and gave it to a Catholic acquaintance, hoping both would outlast the war.

No one knows if either one survived, but once or twice the manuscript seemed to be on the verge of resurfacing. Here is Balint, describing one of those occasions:

> In 1987, Jerzy Ficowski received a telephone call from one Alex Schulz, who claimed to be the illegitimate son of Bruno’s elder brother. Alex, a plumber living in Los Angeles, was born Eizeg Schulz in 1918. His father was from Borysław and his mother from Drohobycz. He told Ficowski he had been contacted by an unnamed man in Lviv seeking a buyer for a two-kilogram (four-and-a-half-pound) packet containing eight drawings by Schulz and the manuscript of *Messiah*.

This was shocking to me not because I hadn’t heard any of it before but precisely because I had: Alex Schulz, that plumber in Los Angeles, was my grandfather. I grew up vaguely aware of the family legend that I was related to Bruno Schulz—a legend my father alternately cherished out of an abiding love of literature and dismissed out of a certain skepticism about the veracity of his own father’s claims. In my teens, when I first read Bruno Schulz, I, too, grew interested in the possible connection. But a genealogical search



BRUNO SCHULZ / COURTESY NATIONAL MUSEUM IN KRAKÓW; OPPOSITE: CARI VANDER YACHT

So much of this story involves things that have gone missing, swept away by cruelty and the ruthless reaping of time.

seemed to lead nowhere—the "illegitimate" part of the tale having been tactfully omitted when it was passed down to me—and, although I occasionally repeated the rumor about my grandfather's parentage, I did not really believe it. Only when I picked up Balint's book did I realize that the stories I'd grown up with had a life far beyond my own family, and that it might be possible to find out if they were true.

Among Bruno Schulz's many identities—Jewish, Polish, artistic, insecure, depressive, masochistic—one of the most determinative was this: he was a homebody. Unsettled by the outside world, he yearned for uninterrupted stretches of solitude. When he was ill at ease, which was often, he soothed himself by drawing the same little stylized image of a house over and over.

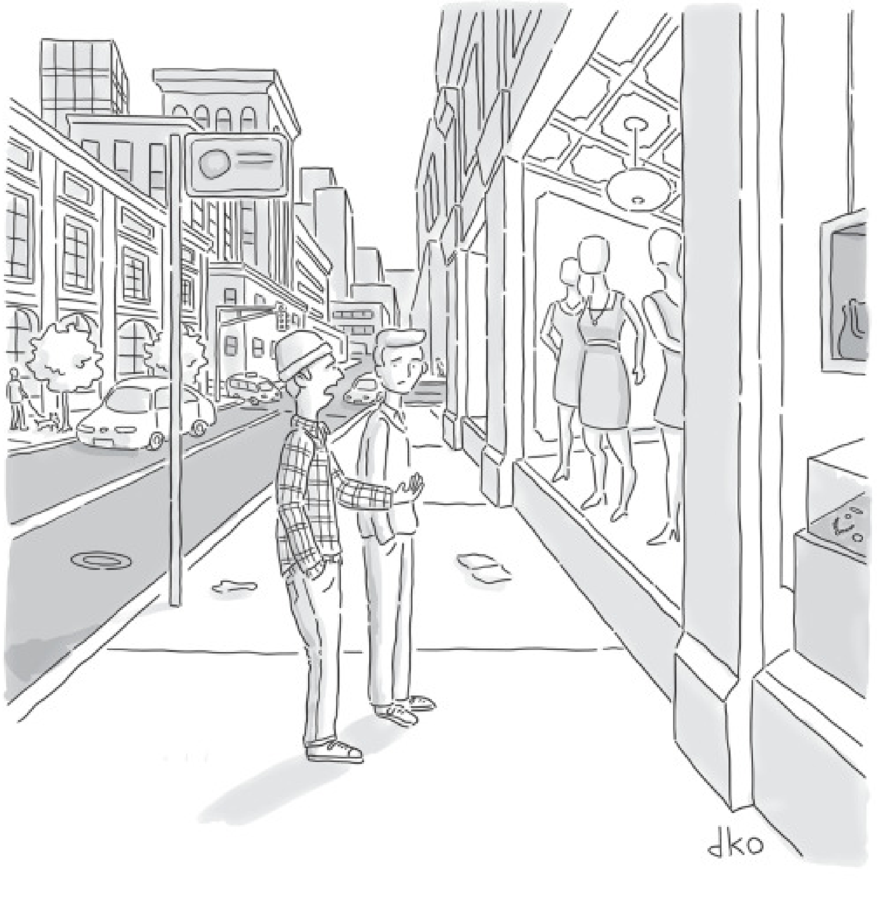
This attachment to the idea of home was peculiar given the actual home in which Schulz was raised. He had two living older siblings, a brother and a sister, and two who died before the age of four. Those deceased siblings meant that Bruno, born in 1892, was by far the baby of the family, twenty years younger than his surviving sister, Hania, and ten years younger than his surviving brother, Baruch Israel, known as Izydor—the man my grandfather thought was his father. As a result, Bruno spent much of his youth as a de-facto only child, living with his parents in an apartment above the family's drygoods store, whose mannequins and bolts of fabric would later fill his fiction. From early on, he loved to draw and hoped to become an artist; for just as long, he suffered from acute self-consciousness and amorphous shame—"One of those people," an acquaintance said, "who kind of apologize for their very existence."

Eventually, Schulz's father contracted tuberculosis and became too sick to work; to save money, the family moved into the house where Hania lived with her family. In 1910, her husband slit his throat, plunging Hania into a depression from which she never recovered. Bruno, who graduated from high school that same year, briefly left to study architecture in Lwów, but the First World War and his father's ailment soon forced him back home, where he would eventually and reluctantly begin teaching art in the same high school from which he had graduated. When he was twenty-two, his father died, leaving behind a household of the widowed, the unwed, and the unwell. Together with his mother, sister, nephews, and an older female cousin, plus a large assortment of cats, Schulz lived in Charles Addams-esque gloom, the paintings covered in cobwebs, the floors creaky with age, the whole atmosphere muffled and morbid.

To most people, Schulz's home town seemed similarly unprepossessing. A Galician backwater permanently altered by the discovery of oil there in the middle of the nineteenth century, Drohobycz combined the provincial character of rural Central Europe with the predictable results of rapid industrialization: rigs and refineries dotting the landscape, bars and brothels filling the town. Other rapid changes, geopolitical rather than geological, likewise buffeted the region: Schulz was born a citizen of the Habsburg Empire but subsequently lived in Ukraine, Poland, the Soviet Union, and the Third Reich, all without leaving Drohobycz (which, today, is again part of Ukraine). But, whatever the town's flaws and whichever flag flew overhead, Schulz could conceive of no other home. "I can't live anywhere else," he once said. "And here I will die."

My grandfather was the opposite of a homebody. A serial escape artist, he possessed a keen sense of danger and excellent timing, qualities that helped sustain his lifelong habit of slipping away at the right moment. That was a crucial ability for a Jew born in 1918 in the soon to be revived nation of Poland, whose Jewish citizens would be all but completely annihilated in a matter of decades.

Yet the Drohobycz my grandfather and Bruno Schulz knew was roughly forty per cent Jewish, with the remaining population split equally between Polish Catholics and Eastern Orthodox Ukrainians. The Jews tended to be



"It's the age-old question: What do you get the woman who has one hundred per cent of your household's earning potential?"

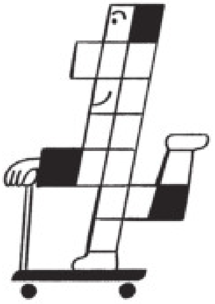
members of the merchant classes, but my grandfather hoped to practice medicine. And so, after grade school, he continued his studies at a gymnasium whose faculty included a particularly beloved art teacher: Bruno Schulz.

That adoration was surprising. Schulz, who never stopped dreading his job, slunk through the hallways like a man trying to make himself invisible, alternately taking sedatives and chewing coffee beans to get through the days. His stooped, cowed, dangerously diffident presence might have made him an object of mockery; instead, he tamed his pupils with stories. One former student recalled a tale about "a wandering knight who was cut in half along with his horse by the unexpected closing of a gate. From that time on, the rider wandered throughout the world on half his horse." Other students remembered other fragments—about a water jug brought to life, a sick child who longed to go outside—while some simply retained a gestalt impression of stories so extraordinary that "the wildest kids sat there enchanted."

However much Schulz's students liked and admired him, they were sometimes exposed, in troubling ways, to his unconventional desires. In the middle of a private art lesson, one female student realized that Schulz was drawing her legs; another student was shocked by a self-portrait showing Schulz crouched at the feet of a woman who was holding a whip and wearing nothing but fishnet stockings. A third recalled a drawing by Schulz featuring a woman stepping into a bathtub that a man was filling with blood from a headless body; decapitated heads, including Schulz's, lay at her feet. The students, embarrassed but attuned to the local rumor mill, got out an encyclopedia and looked up the word "masochist."

As those glimpses suggest, Schulz was simultaneously open and coy about his proclivities. In 1924, he self-published "The Booke of Idolatry," a collection of twenty-six erotic prints that he claimed, falsely, were illustrations for a Polish edition of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's "Venus in Furs." But whether Schulz's private life resembled any of his visual fantasies is unclear. In practice, he seems to have been an extremely shy serial monogamist, nurturing intense but not necessarily consummated relationships with successive women.

For literary history, the most significant of these was the poet and philosopher Debora Vogel. When her mother discouraged the match, Schulz, inclined to agree with anyone who thought poorly of him, did not put up a fight; instead, he retreated into a purely epistolary relationship with his onetime love. Those epistles soon began acquiring postscripts, which, as Balint wonderfully describes it, "grew more fantastical and unmoored from the contents of the letters, like boats pushed away from the shore of reality." Encouraged by Vogel's enthusiasm, he turned those postscripts into stories, which she then helped get in front of Zofia Nałkowska, the grande dame of Polish publishing. It took less than a day for Nałkowska to declare Schulz "the most sensational discovery in our literature." (She would soon become one of his lovers, or, anyway, one of his whatevers. As she once summed up their relationship, "I am charming and kind, and I allow him to idolize me.") The short-story collection she helped usher into existence, "Cinnamon Shops" (published in English, decades later, as "The Street of Crocodiles"), came out in December of 1933.



The book made Schulz famous but not happy. The following year, he told a friend that he could not shake "the sadness of life, fear of the future, some dark conviction that everything is headed for a tragic end." Nor did he get rich enough to quit his job; he still spent his days teaching woodworking and draftsmanship and delivering lectures on topics like "Artistic Formation in Cardboard and Its Application in School." He was able to write only when he could steal time away from such obligations, and from his frequent bouts of depression. Still, in 1937, he published a second collection, "Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass."

The stories in both books took Schulz's attraction to home and rendered it dreamlike, sometimes even grotesque. Their narrator, Joseph, is of indeterminate and changeable age, generally a young boy or a teen-ager. As Schulz did, he lives with his family and a maid in an apartment above a drygoods store, in an unnamed town so deep in the hinterlands that beyond its outskirts "the region turns nameless and cosmic like Canaan." The logic of the stories is the logic of childhood: time is elastic, Joseph's life alternates between monotony and wild adventure, and the less trafficked rooms of his apartment, like the side streets of his town, are places of wonder and dread. In one of those neglected rooms, an entire forest springs up, only to subside just as quickly, so that, by nightfall, "there was no trace left of that splendid flowering."

If that story sounds familiar, it is because Bruno Schulz sometimes reads like a Maurice Sendak for grownups, his tales fantastical and backlit, bent on restoring to life the complicated condition of childhood, its sudden magic and amorphous, looming scariness. Some of his tales scarcely have plots; perhaps my favorite of them, "Cinnamon Shops," could be summed up as "The time Father forgot his wallet and sent me home alone to fetch it." Others are elaborate concoctions that bring to mind Kafka, not least because they are full of characters who undergo strange transformations—including into a cockroach, but most showstoppingly into a doorbell.

That particular transformation comes off as high comedy; despite his tragic life, Schulz was a very funny writer. So impressed is everyone by how well the man turned doorbell performs his duties that "even his wife . . . could not stop herself from pressing the button quite often." But it also comes off as apt for a man of Schulz's temperament. What higher aspiration for him than to be permanently on his own doorstep, singing the song of home?

The same year that "Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass" was published, my grandfather graduated from high school. Still hoping to become a doctor, he wanted to attend university, but by then Poland had begun imposing quotas on Jewish students, and their complete exclusion seemed imminent; in 1937, nationalist students at Lwów University organized "A Day Without Jews." To continue his studies, my grandfather realized, he would need to leave the country, but studying abroad was too expensive to manage on his own. The man who paid his tuition, he later claimed, was his uncle Bruno Schulz.

This was a complicated contention. It's true that Schulz sometimes helped out his students, supplying the poorest of them with food and clothing. But he was never well off, and it's unlikely that he would have been able to finance a foreign education. The same did not hold, however, for his ambitious older brother. An engineer by training, Baruch Israel had worked in the oil industry, served on the National Council of Oil Exporters, and opened a series of successful businesses. Socially and philanthropically active, he was as elegant and charming as Bruno was awkward and shy, and for most of his life he was the one who seemed like the family success story.

Then, in 1935, at the age of fifty-three, Baruch Israel died of a heart attack. Predeceased by his wife, Regina Schulz, he left behind their three children, Wilhelm, Ella, and Jakub—and, apparently, other dependents as well. As Bruno Schulz later wrote, without much elaboration, his brother had been "the breadwinner for a number of families." Whether one of those was my grandfather's, I do not know. Nor do I know if the famously generous philanthropist made any provisions, in life or in death, for a young student attending the same gymnasium where his brother taught. I only know that by September of 1937 my grandfather had left Poland to study medicine in Nancy, France.

To a boy born and raised in Galicia, France was a paradise of liberty and prosperity, but the idyll was short-lived. In the summer of 1939, my grandfather returned home for the term break and was still there when the Nazis invaded Poland. Within two weeks, he had been drafted into the Polish Army, taken prisoner by the Germans, and sent to a labor camp outside Königsberg. After ten days of enduring the terrible conditions—little food, no medical care, daily executions—my grandfather was done waiting around for the worst. The escape, in his telling, was not difficult: he obtained civilian clothing, waited for an opportune moment, and simply walked away.

But for most other European Jews an opportune moment never came. Back in Drohobycz, Bruno Schulz watched as the Nazis reached his home town, then handed it over to the Red Army. For the next two years, he became a forced conscript in the Soviet war on bourgeois corruption, contributing faux-social-realist illustrations to the new local newspaper, *Bolshevik Truth*, and painting a fifty-foot-tall portrait of Stalin for the town hall.

It was a bad life made radically worse in June of 1941, when the Nazis retook Drohobycz. Not even a single day elapsed between their arrival and the mass murder of local Jews. In short order, Jewish possessions were seized, Jewish workers were relieved of their jobs and sent to perform forced labor, and Jewish residents were forbidden to use public buildings, parks, or sidewalks. Within the month, Jews were being rounded up, at first by the dozens and later by the hundreds, taken to a nearby forest, made to dig their own graves, and shot. In November, Schulz and his family were forced out of their home and, together with some twelve thousand other Drohobycz Jews, sent to a newly created ghetto. By March, its residents were being taken to Belzec, the first Nazi death camp to use gas chambers and one of the deadliest. Its name is less well known than that of Auschwitz or Treblinka chiefly because so few people—under ten, out of more than half a million sent there—survived it.

It was nightmarish in every possible way, but Schulz was initially spared the worst of it. Instead of backbreaking labor, he was put to work sorting through art and books that had been looted by the Nazis, tasked with determining what was valuable and what should be destroyed. When that job ended, he was spared once again—this time because a Gestapo officer named Felix Landau, a sadist with artistic pretensions, enlisted him as his personal lackey. Humiliating as this status was, it came with some protection from violence, plus an extra ration of food at a time when some thirty Drohobycz Jews were dying of starvation every day. In exchange, Schulz served as a portrait artist for Landau and his Nazi friends and painted murals on Nazi buildings, including a series of fairy-tale scenes—a Cinderella-like figure, a horse-drawn carriage, Snow White with her dwarfs—in the nursery of Landau's young son.

In Polish, the word for "hourglass" can also mean "obituary"; either way, "Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass" was an apt title for what turned out to be Schulz's final book. For him, as for his fellow-Jews, time was running out. A depressive realist, possessed of unusual powers of both perception and imagination, Schulz had long recognized the coming calamity. "Something wants to ferment out of the concentrated noise of these darkening days—something immense beyond measure," he'd written in a story published the same year as Lwów University's "Day Without Jews." "I test and I calculate what kind of event might . . . equal this catastrophic barometric drop." By 1942, he knew the answer; that spring, he told a former colleague that the Nazis would soon "liquidate" the Jews.

Upon escaping from the labor camp, my grandfather made his way back to France, only to find that it was no longer a safe place for Jews. The French underground got him to Calais; from there, a fishing boat took him across the Strait of Dover. As impressed by England as he had once been by France, he joined the British Army, fighting against Rommel in North Africa and participating in the Allied invasion of Sicily.

After the war, my grandfather, now in Palestine, learned that he was one of horrifyingly few of his kind still alive. Some thirty thousand Jews had lived in Drohobycz and Borysław before the war; only eight hundred or so survived it. Most of my grandfather's immediate family members were killed in the Nazi "actions" around Drohobycz; among his extended family, he counted only two survivors.

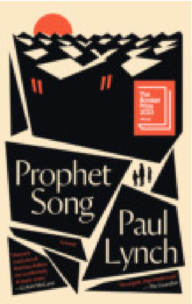
As for the man he thought was his uncle: when catastrophe began closing in, Bruno Schulz set about trying to save his work, gathering up his art and his manuscripts and distributing them among a half-dozen packages to be smuggled out of the ghetto. Yet he made no analogous plans to save himself. Eventually, his friends took matters into their own hands, raising the necessary funds and acquiring forged "Aryan documents" to help him flee.

Thus equipped, Schulz set a date on which to do so: November 19, 1942, which would become known in Drohobycz as Black Thursday. That morning, a Jewish man shot a member of the Gestapo; more than two hundred Jews were slaughtered in retaliation. The details of Schulz's death are murky—Balint recounts five different versions—but the most widely circulated variation concerns an S.S. officer named Karl Günther. Earlier that month, Felix Landau had killed a Jewish man who was under Günther's protection. On the afternoon of Black Thursday, Günther ran into Landau and shared some news: "You killed my Jew, I killed yours."

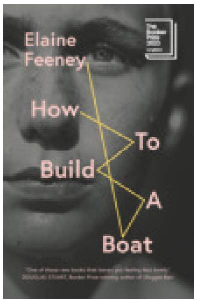
Whether or not that story is true, it is certain that Bruno Schulz was shot to death that day, less than a hundred yards from the house where he was born. When night fell, his body still lay in the street. On his right side he wore an armband. Given to him by Landau, it was meant to broadcast his special status: "Necessary Jew."

It was in Palestine that my grandfather met my grandmother. She was a widow with two sons, and together they had a third; to keep the family afloat, my grandfather, ever the escape artist, found work as a locksmith. But when Tel Aviv became a war zone he decided that it was once again time to leave. Unemployment was rampant across Europe, but he knew of one place where he could earn a living on the booming postwar black market—and so, in February of 1948, three months before the creation of the state of Israel, he moved his wife and children to perhaps the least likely destination imaginable for a family of Jews at the time: Germany. After four years of hawking Leica cameras and American cigarettes there, he had the necessary money and paperwork to leave again—this time for the United States, where the family settled in Michigan. He was safe, finally, but still restive, and once his

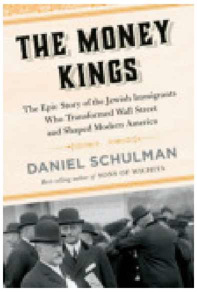
BRIEFLY NOTED



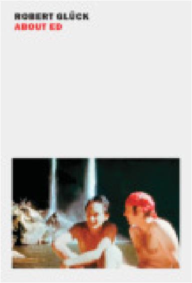
Prophet Song, *by Paul Lynch (Grove)*. This unsettling dystopian novel, which won the 2023 Booker Prize, imagines an Ireland that has fallen into totalitarianism. Its story centers on one family; the father, a union official, is disappeared after being accused of sedition, leading his wife to attempt to get their children out of the country by legal means, and then—once she fails—to resort to underground methods. As Lynch describes the state's security forces firing on peaceful protesters and banning foreign media, he eschews paragraph breaks, denying the reader respite. The mother mourns the death of normalcy: "She sees how happiness hides in the humdrum, how it abides in the everyday toing and froing," Lynch writes, "as though it were a note that cannot be heard until it sounds from the past."



How to Build a Boat, *by Elaine Feeney (Biblioasis)*. In this novel, by a noted poet, a neurodivergent thirteen-year-old named Jamie fixates on building a perpetual-motion machine, imagining that, if he creates one that moves "at the same speed in a continual motion," as his late mother did in a video of herself swimming, it will connect him to her. He finds an ally in a teacher at his school, who is struggling with infertility and a loveless marriage. A new teacher for the woodshop class becomes a refuge for them both, despite arriving with his own mysterious problems. There is perhaps more than enough tragedy to go around, but Feeney's prose is beautifully crisp. Jamie imagines that, in one's final seconds, one's thoughts may be "made up of the energy of your previous moments. Which is all you can ever have."



The Money Kings, *by Daniel Schulman (Knopf)*. This sweeping history focusses on German Jewish banking families in nineteenth-century New York, whose firms—among them Goldman Sachs and Lehman Brothers—helped define the modern financial system. Schulman offers a rich account of that system, and of his subjects' role in shaping it (writing in part, as he says, in order to counter antisemitic falsehoods that have flourished online in recent years). But he anchors his narrative in intimate personal details, creating a compelling portrait of a close-knit Gilded Age aristocracy, which, though its members possessed nearly infinite wealth, was locked out of many of the country's élite institutions. Schulman doesn't shy away from the unsavory (such as the fact that, before the Civil War, the Lehmans owned slaves), rendering his subjects with satisfying complexity.



About Ed, *by Robert Glück (New York Review Books)*. The Ed of the title of this memoir, by a pioneer of the New Narrative movement, is Ed Aulerich-Sugai, the author's ex-lover and longtime friend, who died of AIDS in 1994. Glück documents how he and Ed, a couple for ten years, beginning in the nineteen-seventies, struggled to reconcile their differing views on monogamy. Now Glück wonders if, in writing about Ed and excerpting portions of his dream journals, he is "stealing his memories"—and wrestles with why he, who relied so much on Ed, should outlive him for so long.

sons were grown he traded intemperate Detroit for sunny Los Angeles, and, in 1972, divorced my grandmother.

My earliest memories of my grandfather date to a span of a few months that he spent living with my family, in Cleveland. I think of him at our kitchen table, tiny and wiry, in a ribbed white undershirt and work pants, with a Pall Mall perpetually between his fingers. Affectionate, articulate, and opinionated, he was a good talker, but I was too young to be a good listener, or to know that someday I would wish I had asked him a thousand questions. Only after his death did I learn that he had tried to buy the manuscript of "Messiah," travelled to Poland to meet Jerzy Ficowski, and been in touch with the two of Baruch Israel and Regina's children to survive the war: Jakub, whom he visited in London, and Ella, with whom he maintained a correspondence, providing her with occasional financial support.

To the best of my knowledge, neither sibling ever believed that Alex was their half brother. But Ficowski—who was astonished when my grandfather came to his door, so strong was his physical resemblance to Bruno Schulz—felt that, based on my grandfather's birth certificate, "one had to conclude that he was the illegitimate son of the writer's brother." That birth certificate, handwritten in Polish, was a translation of an Italian version on file at the University of Pisa, where, as a young man, my grandfather had applied to study. It states that my grandfather was born "in wedlock" to Krajndel Fajga Schulz and "Baruch Izrael SCHULZ, an industrialist." In a letter of which I've seen only a fragment, my grandfather affirms that the names are correct but says, "I am puzzled as to why my birth is deemed legitimate."

I, too, am puzzled, although not only by that. Some believe that my grandfather was misled by a coincidence: that his father really was an industrialist by the name of Baruch Israel Schulz, just not the industrialist by the name of Baruch Israel Schulz who was brother to Bruno. That would have been an extremely improbable coincidence, but it would at least answer one of the most fundamental questions in this saga: Why was my grandfather's last name Schulz? His mother's maiden name was Hauser, so presumably she married a Schulz. But which one, and for how long, and if he stuck around, and what happened to him, and who or what in my grandfather's life led him to believe that he was related to Bruno Schulz—all this remains a mystery.

I don't know what made me hopeful that I would be able to answer any of these questions. So much of this history involves things that have gone missing—swept away by cruelty, indifference, the ruthless reaping of time—that it seems fated to remain full of lacunae. Not long after my grandfather met Jerzy Ficowski, while he was awaiting instructions from the man who wanted to sell him "Messiah," he had a massive stroke. He survived another half-dozen years, largely unable to communicate and confined to an assisted-living facility—although, near the end, he somehow managed to break out of it. He was found twenty-six miles away, sitting by the edge of the sea. The manuscript of "Messiah" has never surfaced.

But one set of lost works by Schulz did reappear, touching off a debate that feels relevant to my family's history. In 2001, six decades after the author's murder, the fairy-tale murals he was forced to paint were found, hidden behind pots and pickling jars and coats of paint, in the pantry of an apartment carved out of the building where the Nazi Felix Landau and his family had once lived. The discovery made headlines around the world, the mayor of Drohobycz pledged that the murals would be protected in situ, and efforts at fund-raising began in an attempt to move the current occupants of the building so that it could be turned into a "reconciliation center" dedicated to Bruno Schulz. Instead, three months later, Israeli agents, acting on orders from Yad Vashem, the Holocaust museum, descended on Drohobycz, pried five sections of the mural from the plaster walls, and spirited them back to Jerusalem, in express violation of international laws on the exporting of cultural property.

The question raised by the ensuing global uproar is the same one that haunts my family: Who has the right to claim a relationship to Bruno Schulz? In defending its actions, a Yad Vashem representative reputedly said, "Listen, who visits Drohobych? But two million people visit Yad Vashem annually." Those who agree that the murals belong in Jerusalem argue not just that more people get to experience Schulz's work there but also that Israel has a greater right to that work than Ukraine or Poland. And it is certainly true that both nations have a history of brutal treatment of Jews, and that neither had previously made much effort to honor Bruno Schulz.

Still, the case that Israel has a special claim on Schulz rests almost entirely on the fact that he was shot and killed because he was a Jew—an argument based on his death, not his life. By upbringing, Schulz was essentially what we would today call a secular Jew. He knew neither Hebrew nor Yiddish, the native and in many cases exclusive language of more than eighty per cent of Poland's three million prewar Jews. If he had any theological, political, or social commitments to Judaism, he held them lightly: he routinely crossed himself when his students recited Catholic prayers, and after a Catholic woman he loved agreed to marry him he placed an announcement in the local papers formally withdrawing from the Jewish faith. (She later withdrew herself from the engagement.)

The Nazis nonetheless reduced Schulz to nothing more than his Jewishness, but that strikes me as a strong case for not doing so today. If any place on the planet has a credible claim to him, it is surely Drohobycz, his attachment to which is evident from both his life and his work. The counter-argument is not that Schulz was murdered for being Jewish and that therefore his work belongs at Yad Vashem; it is that Schulz was a brilliant artist and that therefore his work belongs to the world—to anyone, anywhere, who loves his stories.

That relationship—of delight, admiration, even identification—is available to everyone, regardless of nationality, religion, or lineage. This is perhaps the most beautiful thing literature can do: forge a kinship across identities, freed from partisanship, unbound by space or time. If my grandfather was not his nephew, Schulz's last living relative is dead, and I am just another admirer. Yet I find myself content in the knowledge that his descendants are like those promised by God to Abraham: more numerous than the stars. ♦

BOOKS

SPACING OUT

The novelist Samantha Harvey sends astronauts, and readers, into orbit.

BY JAMES WOOD

I can't be the only traveller to gaze out of an airplane window, see the frothed clouds below, and reflect that this now routine astonishment was not offered to Blake, Melville, Tolstoy, Dickinson. Proust's narrator bursts into tears when he sees a plane and imagines what the pilot sees; Virginia Woolf wrote an extraordinary essay in which she imagines London as seen from a pilot's cockpit. But, like their literary predecessors, they were never up there to see the view for themselves. And these are precisely the writers, you feel, who should have been granted access to the real thing—the cosmic artificers, the poets and novelists who moved naturally from the mundane to the massive, who saw God and knew death and narrated time, who sensed that, beyond this "mundane egg" (Blake), "This World is not Conclusion" (Dickinson).

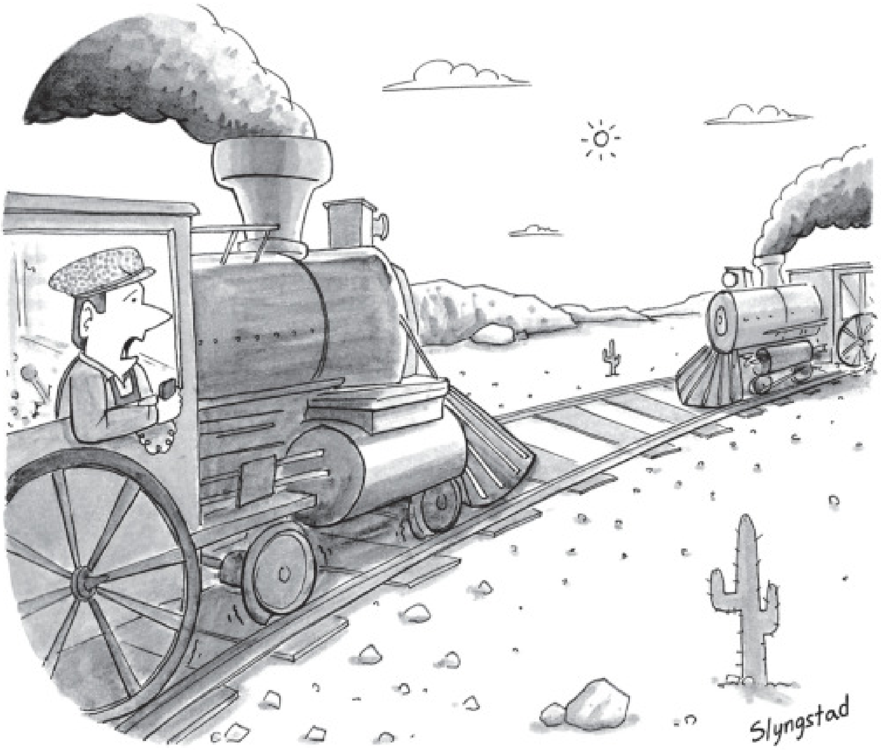
In the nineteen-sixties, there came a new astonishment, followed by its routinization. Bill Anders's "Earthrise" picture, taken on the Apollo 8 moon mission, in 1968, presented the Earth, for the first time, as we see the moon: gibbous, squashed, half shrouded in darkness, and almost ponderously ludic, as if playing sluggish peekaboo. The foreground of the picture, which shows a slip of the moon's firm landscape, made the perspective only more vertiginous. Apollo 17's "Blue Marble," from 1972, was oddly reassuring, the blue-and-green orb resembling both the swirled marbles of childhood and the illuminated globes in toy shops; when we had imagined the world from space, maybe this was what we had seen in our mind's eye. Even this marvel eventually turned habitual, and those famous photographs became posters for dorms and waiting rooms. Voyager 1's image from 1990, of our world seen as a tiny blue dot from nearly four billion miles away, is, as Carl Sagan suggested, salutarily humbling; it has been followed by similarly minuscule transfigurations, visual scrapings from Mars and Saturn.

But most of us don't live as if humbled. Whether, in these beautiful images, our world seems large or tiny, central or radically decentered, what is truly remarkable is how quickly our wonderment goes back to sleep. How many of us give much of a thought to, say, the hovering H of the International Space Station, which orbits the Earth sixteen times a day as we go about our lives, some two hundred and fifty miles below it? And how many novelists have bothered to think through what life might be like for the humans trying to exist in this hurtling cubicle? To describe in words what our glowing Earth might look like from the portholes of some flimsy ship would be a statement of faith in what words can uniquely do.

Samantha Harvey, one of the most consistently surprising contemporary British novelists, becomes something like the cosmic artificer of our era with her slim, enormous novel "Orbital" (Grove), which imaginatively constructs the day-to-day lives of six astronauts aboard the International Space Station. "Orbital" is the strangest and most magical of projects, not least because it's barely what most people would call a novel but performs the kind of task that only a novel could dare. It's barely a novel because it barely tells a plotted set of human stories, and the stories it does tell barely interact with one another. Yes, Harvey gives her six astronauts fictional first names and various nationalities. In this sense, they are preliminary fictional characters. Roman and Anton are from Russia, Chie is from Japan, Nell from the U.K., Pietro

"Orbital" is barely a novel but brilliantly performs the work only a novel can.

PHOTOGRAPH BY GABRIELLA DEMCZUK



"That sixth grader swore we'd have several more hours!"

• •

from Italy, and Shaun from the United States: two women and four men. Roman, Nell, and Shaun, who arrived three months ago to join the others, are the ship's newbies. Each is given a strip or two of backstory, enough to mobilize a rudimentary plot. In Japan, Chie's mother has just died. Nell's brother, in Wales, has the flu. On board, Pietro listens to Duke Ellington while he works out. Anton's marriage is unhappy; his wife has been unwell for a long time. And so on. In addition, the astronauts have their particular tasks while in orbit. Pietro monitors microbes, Chie and Nell are doing experiments with mice. All of them are experimenting on their own bodies, testing and checking the limits and stresses of prolonged weightless existence.

But this minimal fictionality is not really the point; it's merely the ransom paid to the genre in order to resemble the novelistic. The point is everything else: the almost unimaginable unworldliness of the situation. Six imprisoned professionals are speeding around the world at seventeen and a half thousand miles an hour. They circle the Earth sixteen times a day, and thus daily witness sixteen sunrises and sixteen sunsets ("the whip-crack of morning arrives every ninety minutes"). A gigantic typhoon can be seen gathering over the western Pacific and moving toward the Philippines and Indonesia; this event, from the godlike vantage of the I.S.S., is important but also irrelevant, no more than a vicious corkscrew of distant cloud cover on that faraway blue marble. The real point of "Orbital" is the demonstration of how a writer might capture this spectacular strangeness in language adequate to the spectacle. And how she might do so with fitting surplus, in ways that surpass the more orderly permissions of journalism and nonfictional prose.

Harvey, writing like a kind of Melville of the skies, finds that fitting surplus again and again. First, she attends with imaginative curiosity to the question of embodiment. It's one thing to learn as fact that, say, astronauts aboard the I.S.S. are given to headaches and nausea, or that their dried food—already compromised, of course—is tasteless because their sinuses are so often blocked. (Without gravity, our sinuses don't drain as they should.) Or to learn that mornings aboard the spaceship begin with two hours of running on a treadmill, weight-lifting with resistance devices, and stationary-bike riding, so that the astronauts' muscles don't atrophy. But what might it *feel* like to be experiencing such things, to be sailing in this frictionless Pequod, these cramped quarters where, as Harvey puts it, the floors are walls and the walls are ceilings and the ceilings are floors? Harvey writes of Pietro that "everything in his body seems to lack commitment to the cause of its animal life," a description that may or may not be physiologically accurate but which is imaginatively acute. In a similar vein, she writes about the suspension of time in orbit, of how the astronauts "feel space trying to rid them of the notion of days. It says: what's a day? They insist it's twenty-four hours and ground crews keep telling them so, but it takes their twenty-four hours and throws sixteen days and nights at them in return." Again, it's one thing to learn how astronauts sleep aboard the I.S.S. (strapped to a bed and slotted into a compartment that's not unlike an old British telephone kiosk). But how might it *feel* to sleep while floating in space, to sleep while dimly aware that a mad earthly floor show of light and darkness is constantly spooling beneath you? Harvey's prose has an instinct for a kind of exact magic. "Even when you sleep you feel the earth turning," she writes. "You feel all the days that break through your seven-hour night. You feel all the fizzing stars and the moods of the oceans and the lurch of the light through your skin, and if the earth were to pause for a second on its orbit, you'd wake with a start knowing something was wrong." Is this how it really feels? I'm persuaded by its imaginative accuracy, in the way that I'm persuaded by the imaginative accuracy of Tolstoy's descriptions of warfare.

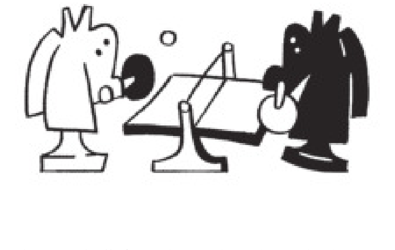
Photographs and video bring us the sickly terror of watching astronauts spacewalking, hanging off the limbs of their station while fixing something or other, the irradiated Earth looming below them. But Harvey's six-page imagining of it plunges the reader, as even video cannot quite do, into the game of becoming that spacewalker, in both terror and ecstasy. Nell and Pietro are installing a spectrometer. Nell has been told not to look down, but how can she not? Alarmingly, the Earth below her "doesn't have the appearance of a solid thing, its surface is fluid and lustrous." Her feet are dangling above a continent, "her left foot obscuring France, her right foot Germany. Her gloved hand blotting out western China." She reflects that her underwater training hasn't quite prepared her for something that is closer to surfing than to swimming. Then she looks down again, and now the Earth is not terrifying but magnificent, "blue and cloud-scudded and improbably soft against the truss of the craft." She relaxes somewhat into her tasks. The closest analogy Nell can summon is how one flies in dreams, "because it ought to be impossible for a heavy wingless body to be gliding this freely and smoothly and yet here it is and it seems that you are finally doing the thing for which your being was born. It is hard to believe." She looks down yet again, and the Earth seems to hang like a "hallucination, something made by and of light, something you could pass through the centre of, and the only word that seems to apply to it is *unearthly*."

I've quoted this episode at length so as to convey the remarkable quality of immersion that "Orbital" offers, how narrative becomes not plot but the pacing of sensation. (It's a viscerality that characterized Harvey's last book, "The Shapeless Unease: A Year of Not Sleeping," a nonfiction account of her insomnia; this particular light sleeper had to stop reading it, fearful of catching its anxiety.) And notice, too, the musical modulations of Harvey's prose, how easily the ordinary (vertigo) consorts with the marvellous (*space* vertigo), and how quickly this prose music moves into the key of the metaphysical: there's something inevitable, yet beautifully unexpected, about arriving at the vision of our Earth as "unearthly."

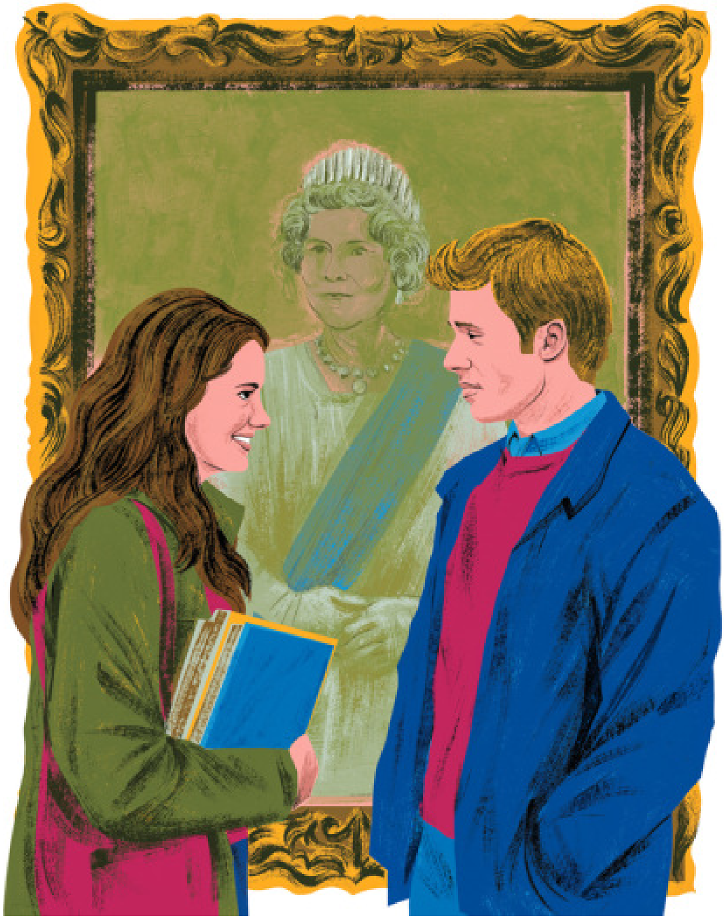
Of course, any cosmic poetics is bound to be a cosmic metaphysics as well. As Melville describes and redescribes his whale, so Harvey ceaselessly drapes our globe in words, and, as with Melville, each redescription is also a reckoning, a theological sizing up. Always, there's astonishment—Harvey begins and ends with astonishment—especially at the way the world is lit, how it is "chiming with light":

> In the new morning of today's fourth earth orbit the Saharan dust sweeps to the sea in hundred-mile ribbons. Hazy pale green shimmering sea, hazy tangerine land. This is Africa chiming with light. You can almost hear it, this light, from inside the craft. Gran Canaria's steep radial gorges pile the island up like a sandcastle hastily built, and when the Atlas Mountains announce the end of the desert, clouds appear in the shape of a shark whose tail flips at the southern coast of Spain, whose fin-tip nudges the southern Alps, whose nose will dive any moment into the Mediterranean. Albania and Montenegro are velvet soft with mountain.

This illumination makes the world seem palace-like, heavenly: "If we must go to an improbable, hard-to-believe-in place when we die, that glassy, distant orb with its beautiful lonely light shows could well be it." At other moments, from such a distance the Earth seems completely uninhabited; or mankind a creature that comes out only at night, with flares. Perhaps this uninhabited place is nothing more than the ruins of a civilization. At only two hundred and fifty miles' distance, our glowing world still seems to occupy a privileged place. These astronauts, Harvey writes, "could still be led to believe that God himself had dropped it there, at the very centre of the waltzing universe. . . . No far-hurled nothingy satellite could bother itself with these shows of beauty, no paltry rock could arrange such intricacy as fungus and minds." On the other hand, they can also see the infinite darkness that surrounds it, and they have a better sense than do most humans of the vast, eternal spaces that so terrified Pascal. From this Earth we send out probes and capsules and cameras to distant planets, we angle huge dishes to pick up signs of other life, but the galaxies appear to have nothing to say to us, and we must grasp "the staggering extent of our own nonextent." We may be hideously unaccompanied. Harvey wonders whether, if human civilization is like a single life, we're in a late-teen phase of nihilism and self-harm, trashing the planet "because we didn't ask to be alive, we didn't ask to inherit an earth to look after, and we didn't ask to be so completely unjustly darkly alone." When the end finally comes, in a few billion years, and the Earth boils up as the sun consumes us, it'll just be, from the point of view of the galaxies, "a minor scuffle, a mini-drama."



Metaphysically speaking, there is only silence. No more than God do the galaxies answer our petitions. Melville was haunted by this silent loneliness: "Moby-Dick" is tormented by "the pyramidical silence" of the whale, and, in his novel "Pierre," he writes, "Silence is the Voice of our God . . . how does a man get a Voice out of Silence?" Harvey isn't an anguished nineteenth-century doubter, adrift in the Sea of Faith. She's closer in spirit to the writer she has said she most admires, Virginia Woolf—quizzical about meaning, skeptical about religious faith, yet open to apprehensions of mystery. There's no demented Captain Ahab, or even an earnestly seeking Lily Briscoe in "Orbital." Professionals in every respect, Harvey's astronauts are also athletes of metaphysics, competent enough to keep their world views to themselves. Nell, the Brit, wants to ask Shaun, the American, how he can believe in a creationist God, but she's already anticipated his answer: How could you be an astronaut and *not* believe in God? She'd point out the windows, at the violent starry diaspora, and ask him who could have made that "but some heedless hurling beautiful force?" And he'd point at the same display and ask, "What made that but some heed*ful* hurling beautiful force?" It seems almost no difference at all, and yet on it everything pivots. So she says nothing, and her generous coexistence seems to echo a generous agnosticism in Harvey's own view of things. "It is hard to believe," Nell reflected earlier, about the fact that she was hanging off a spaceship hundreds of miles above the round Earth. Samantha Harvey has written a magnificently strange and utterly original book that makes it just a little easier to believe in that particular miracle. When it comes to belief, isn't that quite a lot to be getting on with? ♦



ON TELEVISION

ROYAL BLUES

The end of "The Crown," on Netflix.

BY INKOO KANG

The first four seasons of "The Crown," the Netflix period drama about Queen Elizabeth II's long reign, covered roughly forty years of British history. For many American viewers, the appeal of the series lay not only in the fair-minded characterizations of the Royal Family and the visual extravagances of one of the most expensive shows ever made but also in the deft incorporation of events that shaped U.K. politics, culture, and national identity. Season 1 revisited the Great Smog of 1952, which killed thousands of Londoners; Season 2 the Profumo scandal, which brought down a Prime Minister; and Season 3 the Aberfan disaster, a Welsh mining collapse that buried dozens of schoolchildren, whose deaths Elizabeth would later wish she had commemorated more swiftly.

By contrast, nearly half of the sixth and final season traverses less than three months in 1997: the weeks leading up to Princess Diana's death and its immediate aftermath. That time frame underscores the narrowing of the show's focus. Its creator, Peter Morgan, seems to have lost all interest in Elizabeth's subjects, except when they turn on her for her conspicuous silence in the days following that fateful car crash in Paris. Prime Minister Tony Blair (Bertie Carvel), too, is most notable for his approval ratings; his popularity, which earns him the nickname King Tony, gives the Queen literal nightmares. Morgan treats the Windsors primarily as media figures—the people watch the Queen on the telly while the Queen watches them back. (Reports suggest that she watched "The Crown," too.) But the post-Diana episodes are a study of celebrity without the requisite star power.

Will and Kate's slow-burn romance is sweet but painfully mundane.

The show can be divided into the B.D. era, Before Diana, and the A.D. era, After Diana. "The Crown" in the B.D. years was stuffy and prim. Its most moving characters were Prince Philip, the Queen's husband, and Princess Margaret, her younger sister—perhaps because, while Morgan admires the self-sacrifice it takes to sit impassively on the throne, his heart is with those who must stand next to it for decades with a forced smile. When Diana Spencer (a lively, elfin Emma Corrin) was introduced, in the fourth season, she jump-started the series by unsettling her in-laws and inviting the audience to see the family through an outsider's perplexed gaze. "The Crown" has clung to her ever since. After her death, Morgan even resorted to necromancy, reviving the People's Princess (now embodied by Elizabeth Debicki) as an apparition who soothes a disconsolate Charles (Dominic West) and makes peace with a grieving but resentful Elizabeth (Imelda Staunton). Debicki, for her part, turned out to be perfect casting; like Diana, she's magnetic when she's trying not to look sad, and failing miserably.

Diana's story is inextricable from the monarchy's obsession with optics; she was the family's most talented exploiter of the media, and also its most tragic victim. The season première finds her as a lonesome divorcée entertaining her boys aboard a yacht owned by the Egyptian businessman Mohamed al-Fayed (Salim Daw). She offers the paparazzi a glimpse of her tan limbs and leopard-print swimsuit in exchange for privacy for her children—a decision that proves, like her trust in Fayed himself, to be a dangerous miscalculation. These photos only create a hunger for more breathless coverage of her nascent relationship with Fayed's son, Dodi (Khalid Abdalla). The monster that Diana thought she could tame grows bigger—and ultimately swallows her whole.

Diana's beauty, the fairy-tale veneer

ILLUSTRATION BY CHLOE CUSHMAN

of her marriage to Charles, and her refusal to sport a stiff upper lip during its soap-operatic breakdown all helped reduce the Royal Family to tabloid fodder. (No other king has ascended the throne after having his tampon-related dirty talk printed in the nation's papers.) The season's strongest episode, "Willsmania," implicitly links Diana's influence and the treatment that her elder son, William (Ed McVey), receives after her demise, when the fifteen-year-old was subjected to adoration verging on idolatry that must have been as baffling as it was upsetting. It's no wonder that, having witnessed his parents sling mud at each other through the press, he shies away from the relentless public scrutiny of his academic and romantic choices.

The Royal Family's popularity never seemed to bounce back after Diana's departure from it, and "The Crown" never recovers from her death. As the series draws to a close, Morgan ushers the youngest generation into his portrayal of the Firm. An arc about William gradually shaking off his youthful misanthropy and coming to accept his fate as a future monarch is about as engaging as the post-Diana episodes get. While he's a sympathetic presence, his diffidence and reserve leave him ill-suited to the rom-com role he's meant to occupy when he develops a crush on a classmate named Kate Middleton (Meg Bellamy). Compared with the liaisons of their forebears, their slow-burn romance is sweet but painfully mundane: a flirtation that begins with awkward small talk in the university library is a far cry from, say, the star-crossed love affair between Princess Margaret and the flying ace Peter Townsend.

Unfortunately, Margaret and other once-vibrant figures are now constrained by age and infirmity; on two separate occasions, Morgan wrings pathos from the possibility that an elderly family member has died in her sleep. Without a living protagonist fit to carry it, "The Crown" is increasingly populated by ghosts—Diana's, Dodi's, even those of the still-kicking Queen, whose younger self informs her, "If you went looking for Elizabeth Windsor, you wouldn't find her . . . you buried her years ago." As the more charismatic characters recede into the background, Morgan's myopic focus on the handful who capture his attention—a coterie that doesn't include Prince Andrew and Sarah Ferguson, those other tabloid fixtures of the nineties—begins to feel claustrophobic. War continues in the Balkans, the Twin Towers are obliterated, and Blair's international standing goes into free fall when his powerful American ally, Bill Clinton, is replaced by George W. Bush, a man he's never met. If anything happens in Britain during this time other than Blair's slide in the polls, we don't learn about it.

Morgan has evidently soured on Teflon Tony since writing the screenplay of the 2006 film "The Queen." That Blair (Michael Sheen) was equal parts compassionate and canny. This new incarnation is a political Icarus whose blinkered modernity leaves no appreciation for the allure of tradition. Elizabeth's cri de coeur for employing a Washer of the Sovereign's Hands, a Warden of the Swans, and a Hereditary Grand Falconer stands out as one of the most monarchist moments of the entire series. It's almost persuasive, until you think about the public funds required to prop up the divine right of kings.

Inevitably, the season is shadowed by the actual Elizabeth's passing, last year, which came with its own questions about the relevance and durability of the monarchy. "If I go on another twenty, twenty-five years, a tired, white-haired, geriatric Queen will hand over to a tired, white-haired, geriatric Prince of Wales," she prophesies. It's Philip (Jonathan Pryce) who makes the argument against her abdication: "Those that come after you are not remotely ready to take over." Yet the fictionalized Charles of 2005 appears eminently qualified for the job. That he's played by someone as conventionally attractive as West is an affront to common sense, as is the depiction of the current sovereign as a doting partner (to Camilla), an emotionally accessible father, and a would-be reformist whose potential is wasted as a perennial heir apparent. Charles is no Diana, naturally attuned to the whims of the people—his spin doctor (Ben Lloyd-Hughes) is rarely far from his side, advising on how to present himself, his children, and his relationship to the best effect. But Morgan seems to believe that "The Crown," like the institution itself, needs a hero. The real-life King couldn't have asked for better P.R. ♦

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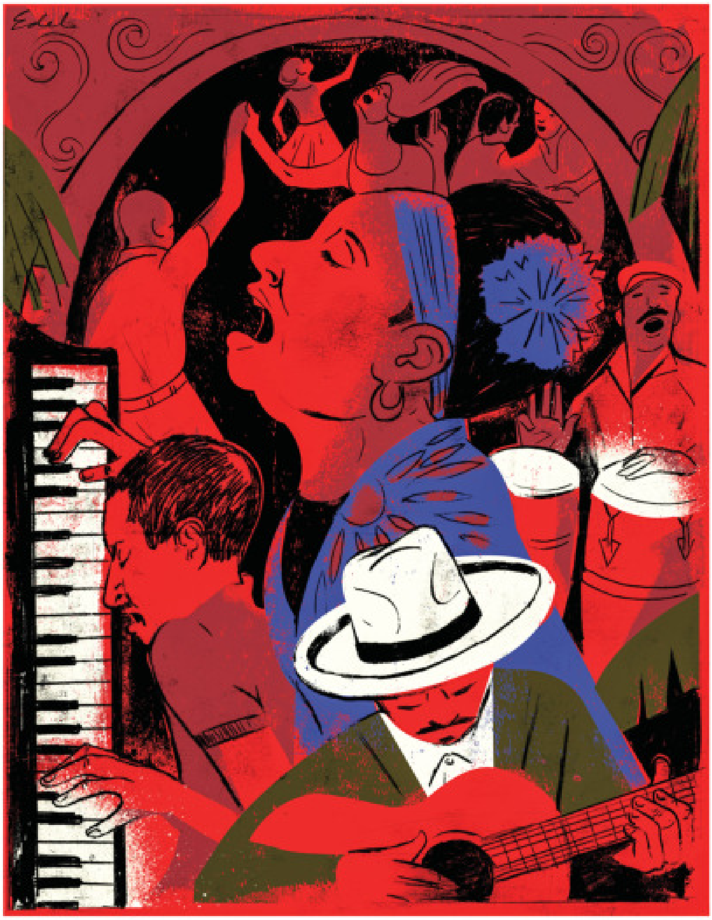

The songs in “Buena Vista” symbolize a society responding to a changing world.

THE THEATRE

MUSICAL REVOLUTION

“Buena Vista Social Club” and “How to Dance in Ohio.”

BY VINSON CUNNINGHAM

There’s nothing in music—nothing, really, in the entire world of sound—like human voices working in tandem. In unison or in harmony, vocal collaboration is a metaphor befitting music’s relation to society: if we can sing together, maybe we can work together, too.

“Buena Vista Social Club”—a new musical, directed by Saheem Ali, for Atlantic Theatre Company, with a book by Marco Ramirez and music by the eponymous award-winning musical collective, the subjects of the 1999 documentary by Wim Wenders on which this show is based—draws its fun, its exuberance, and its occasional moments of emotional depth from its focus on how voices come together to change societies, or to convey their sicknesses. After a vivid opening number, the story begins in a recording studio in Havana, Cuba, where a young musicology student and bandleader, Juan de Marcos (Luis Vega), has come to ask a life-changing favor of the legendary singer Omara Portuondo (Natalie Venetia Belcon). He thinks that Cuban music hasn’t got its due, that it’s more than fit fare for tourists, that a voice like Omara’s and the history she symbolizes shouldn’t go unrecorded. He’s assembled a band and booked studio time; all she has to do is show up.

Belcon’s queenly Omara—modelled on the actual Omara Portuondo, who is showcased in Wenders’s film—is spiky, remote, set in her ways. She’s lived through the history that de Marcos can evoke only nostalgically in reference to the songs he loves. Those songs remind Omara of real people and real events, political interludes whose senselessness and brutality have left unmusical lacunae in her life. Now she’s curt and uncollaborative—perhaps the best indication of her current state of mind is that she sings not with a live band but over a prerecorded track. She’s not a musician to make friends. Not anymore.

Once she agrees, very tentatively and with a handful of qualifications, to work with Juan and his band, her mind goes roving into her personal history. She finds Compay (Julio Monge), a guitarist and singer she used to know, and enlists him as a backup musician. They do what singers and old souls do: rhapsodize about the past. The rest of the show plays out in two strands, like a pair of friends singing in tight thirds: in the present, there’s the recording project; in Omara’s youth there’s so much trouble, so much musical and political ferment.

In the old days, Compay took Omara to a club in a tough neighborhood called the Buena Vista Social Club. Omara (played as a young woman by Kenya Browne) had no business being there—she was a member of a singing group with her sister Haydee (Danaya Esperanza), playing respectable joints like the Tropicana Club, where Black musicians had to perform from beneath the stage, working their magic unseen. Color is a key logic of this show, a cruel fiction that drives a canyon between people whose fates are twinned but who can’t see past skin. The young Omara watches a busboy, Ibrahim (Olly Sholotan), singing onstage, a number called “Bruca Maniguá,” which makes frank, plangent overtures to Black liberation. It reminds Omara of a lullaby that her grandmother used to sing. It also reminds her that at her glossy gigs at the Tropicana nothing as politically troubled as this song—nothing so real—would ever make it to the stage.

The fires of revolution are licking at these people’s heels. Precise politics are never openly discussed—a flaw in a show whose premise is that music is politically consequential, that it can alter the historical outcomes it later renders in song—

ILLUSTRATION BY EDEL RODRIGUEZ

but, in fact, at the time Fulgencio Batista's government was being overthrown, and comfortable, relatively wealthy families like Omara's were being labelled as traitors by Fidel Castro's revolutionaries, giving them an incentive to flee the island. Compay has a small-time hustle running cases of rum through the club—what he doesn't know is that these cases also carry revolutionary weaponry.

This may sound like a lot of story to wade through, but the plot points are more like pretexts for song. Most of the two-hour running time of "Buena Vista Social Club" is taken up by full-length renditions of tunes arranged by the band for which the show is named. That's a good thing, because the band assembled here is wonderful, and the songs themselves—their open sorrows, their clear laments, their insistence, via so much percussion, on their Afro-Cuban roots—contain more social content than the show's dialogue allows. The club scenes are lit with seductive, low-lidded color; they might remind you of a joyful, sexy work by the painter Ernie Barnes. There are excellent dancers, set loose in long numbers choreographed by Patricia Delgado and Justin Peck. Belcon and Monge and Mel Semé (playing Ibrahim in his older days) sing beautifully, especially when they join up and surrender to harmony.

The singing I liked best, though, comes in call-and-response moments, when the horn players drop their instruments and sing, in unison, in answer to what's happening with the leads. That's a symbol of the sound of an entire society calling out in response to a changing world as it rolls forward unimpeded. As much as I liked the song-heavy orientation of "Buena Vista Social Club," I do wish it had brought more of that world in. A documentary about musicians on the comeback trail might well be justified in letting politics live subtextually, but to slightly fictionalize the same material and render it as narrative makes context crucial.

Ramirez does an admirable job of showing how the system of color and caste in Cuba affected a dark-skinned kid like Ibrahim, who, later, has accrued a life filled with missed opportunities because of his color. But, for a scene set in late-fifties Cuba, to have color be the clearest takeaway is to have failed to consider something huge about the afterlife of colonization, the alchemy of revolutionary rhetoric, and the troubling hemispheric influence of the United States, which, in this show, is vaguely gestured at but never named. It wouldn't matter so much if the songs themselves—all specifics, right there in the choruses and the solos, in the grain of the voices—didn't make their own requests. The show is an amazing time. I would have stayed longer to hear its darker side.

The new Broadway musical "How to Dance in Ohio"—at the Belasco, directed by Sammi Cannold, with a book and lyrics by Rebekah Greer Melocik, music by Jacob Yandura, and choreography by Mayte Natalio—is based on a Peabody-winning documentary of the same name, about a group of young people, in their late teens and early twenties, who are on the autism spectrum and share a support group. At the beginning of the show, Desmond Luis Edwards, Amelia Fei, Madison Kopec, Liam Pearce, Conor Tague, Ashley Wool, and Imani Russell approach the lip of the stage, letting the audience know that they are autistic people playing autistic parts—a powerful gesture that reverberates through a show whose ultimate point, pronounced loudly, is that the work of representing autistic people should start from within that community, not from some condescendingly interested gaze from without.

They're getting ready for a dance concocted by the leader of the group, Dr. Emilio Amigo (Caesar Samayoa). They've all got their worries. Drew (Pearce) is debating where to go to college, here at home or away at the University of Michigan. Marideth (Kopec) loves the safety of "facts," preferring them to the more ambiguous realm of one-on-one interaction. Remy (Edwards) is trying to get his TikTok channel up and running.

The show's great strength lies in its specifics: it reveals just how hard it can be to leave the house, to establish routines, to arrange one's face in a way that invites the world in. The production doesn't allow its songs—competent fare, deftly arranged—to tempt it to convey mere impressions rather than giving us the real article, and outlining how individual lives meet the world and contribute to its turning. ♦

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ANSWER KEY

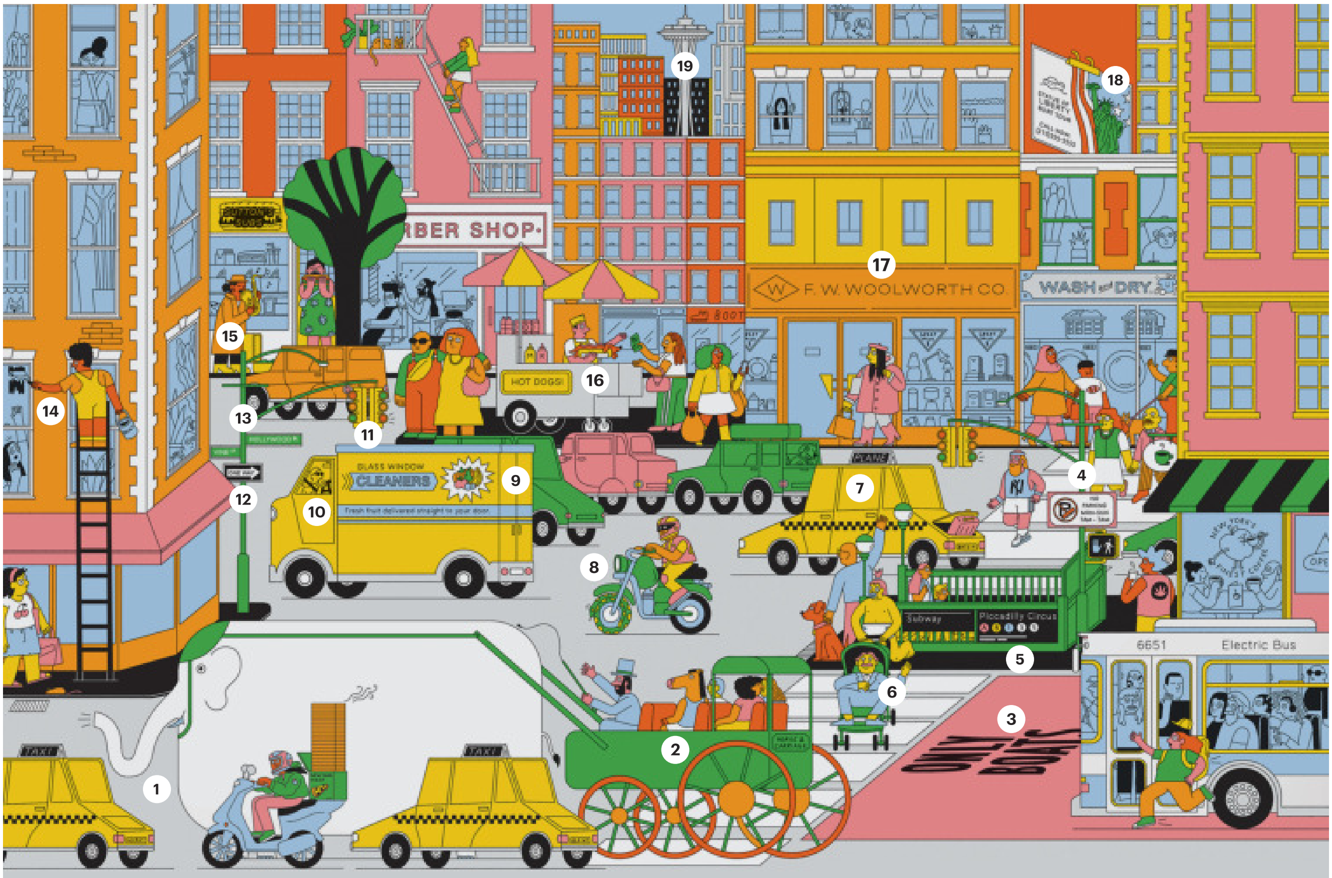
ONLY IN NEW YORK

page 20

Here are the nineteen unusual things we spotted in this image:

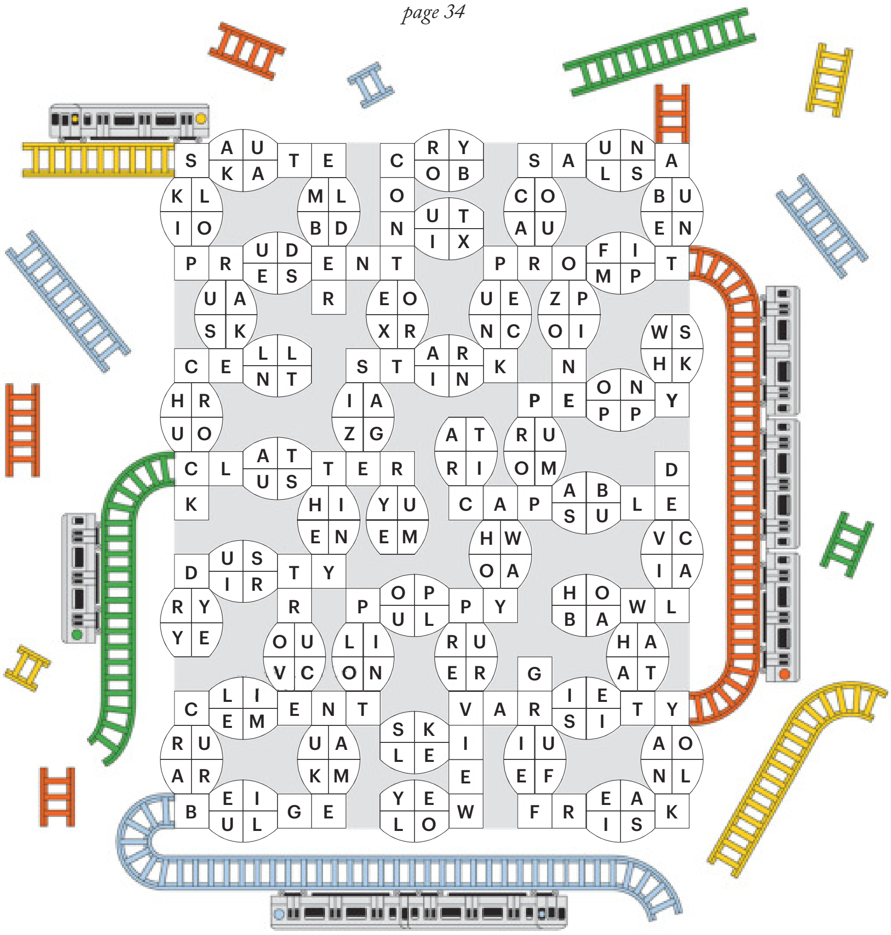
1 An elephant is pulling the horse-drawn carriage.
2 One of the passengers in the carriage is a horse.
3 The bus lane is labelled “BOATS ONLY.”
4 The “NO PARKING” street-cleaning sign prohibits parking at all times.
5 Piccadilly Circus is a stop on the London Underground, not the New York City subway. (Also, the colors for all the train lines are wrong, and there’s no stop at which the A, B, 1, 3, and 5 trains meet.)
6 In the crosswalk, a baby is pushing an adult in a stroller.
7 One of the taxis is labelled “PLANE” (and—worse yet—the trunk is open).
8 One of the wheels of the moped is a snake.
9 The yellow truck is having an identity crisis: it can’t decide whether its purpose is window cleaning or fruit delivery.
10 The driver of that truck is facing backward.
11 On one of the traffic lights, the red and green are flipped.
12 The one-way sign is pointing against the flow of traffic.
13 The street signs mark the intersection of Hollywood and Vine—two famous streets in Los Angeles, not New York.
14 The window cleaner is painting the window rather than washing it.
15 The saxophone player is blowing into the wrong end of the saxophone.
16 The hot-dog vender is selling a bun with a dachshund in it (and ketchup on top).
17 There are no more Woolworth stores in New York.
18 On the billboard, the Statue of Liberty is holding a flashlight instead of a torch.
19 Seattle’s Space Needle is visible in the distance.

(Also, there’s a person eating a submarine sandwich like it’s a hamburger, but she’s just a weirdo.)


19
18
BARBER SHOP
17
F. W. WOOLWORTH CO
WASH and DRY
15
HOT DOGS!
16
14
13
11
HOLLYWOOD
VINE
ONE WAY
12
GLASS WINDOW CLEANERS
Fresh fruit delivered straight to your door.
10
9
PLANE
7
4
8
Subway
Piccadilly Circus
5
6651
Electric Bus
6
3
ONLY BOATS
2
TAXI
TAXI
1

TRACK MAINTENANCE

page 34



A U R Y U N
S T E C S A A
K A O B L S
K L M L O C O B U
U T
I O B D N A U E N
I X
U D F I
P R E N T P R O T
E S M P
U A R E O U E Z P
S K X R N C O I W S
L L A R
C E S T K N H K
N T I N
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U O Z G A T R U
A T
C L T E R R I O M D
U S
A B
K H I Y U C A P L E
S U
E N E M H W V C
U S
D T Y O A I A
I R
O P H O
R Y R P P Y W L
U L B A
Y E O U L I R U H A
V C O N E R G A T
L I I E
C E N T V A R T Y
E M S I
S K
R U U A I I U A O
L E
A R K M E E F N L
E I Y E E A
B G E W F R K
U L L O I S

CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

page 35

ACROSS

1 FROM (anag.)
4 PAN + G
7 IAGO (even letters of *DiMaggio*)
8 ARLO (even letters of *Harrelson*)
10 SORBET (*sore bay* hom.)
11 TIME (rev.)
13 HEAD TRIP (anag.)
14 O + RDERING (*grinder* anag.)
18 YOGA (hidden rev.)
19 MISA + D + D (*as I'm* rev.)
20 A + TOM
21 E-CON (pun)
22 NINE (hidden)
23 RENT (2 defs.)

DOWN

🚦 **1** FIFTH (*f* for *r* in *Firth*)
2 RAPIER WIT (anag.)
3 MOOED (*mood* hom.)
🚦 **4** PAR + K
5 (h)ARBO(r) + (t)RIO(s)
6 GOT UP (*put* + *o* + *g* rev.)
🚦 **9** LE(XING)T + O + N (central letters of *through* and *fitness*)
🚦 **12** MADISON (anag.)
14 O(H), MAN
15 RYDER (anag.)
16 G(A)UN + T
17 F(R)AME

SEEING STARS

page 24

1 Allen Ginsberg
(Talon - T + grins - R + berg)

2 Andy Warhol
(And + E + war + hall)

3 Duke Ellington
(Duke + L + ring - R + tin)

4 Yoko Ono
(Yolk + O + O + no)

5 Robert De Niro
(Robber + T + D + Nero)

6 Zora Neale Hurston
(Zorro - O + A + kneel + hearse + ton)

7 Lorraine Hansberry
(Low + rain + hands + berry)

8 Jean-Michel Basquiat
(Jaw + N + MI [Michigan] + shell + baa + ski + at)

9 Patti Smith
([Hamburger] pattysmith)

1. D; 2. C; 3. A; 4. I; 5. F; 6. B; 7. G; 8. E; 9. H

TRIMMING THE TREE

page 38

A. Word on the Tree	**B. New Word**
1 SECURE	1 RECUSE
2 HUNTS	2 ONCE
3 ECHOIC	3 CHOICE
4 SINGSONG	4 KING KONG
5 ASTER	5 EASTERN
6 BAKERY	6 FAKERY
7 RECRUITER	7 ERIE
8 AMAZE	8 LAMAZE
9 NEEDS	9 LEEDS
10 CLIPS	10 ECLIPSE
11 HATRED	11 RED
12 MAMMON	12 SAMSON
13 ATE	13 EIGHT
14 NEVERMORE	14 NEON
15 ALTERING	15 TRIANGLE
16 GYRATE	16 HYDRATE
17 ELEVEN	17 EVEN
18 RETINUE	18 REUNITE

The first letters of the answers in the left column spell "She's a branch manager." The first letters of the answers in the right column spell "Rockefeller sent her."

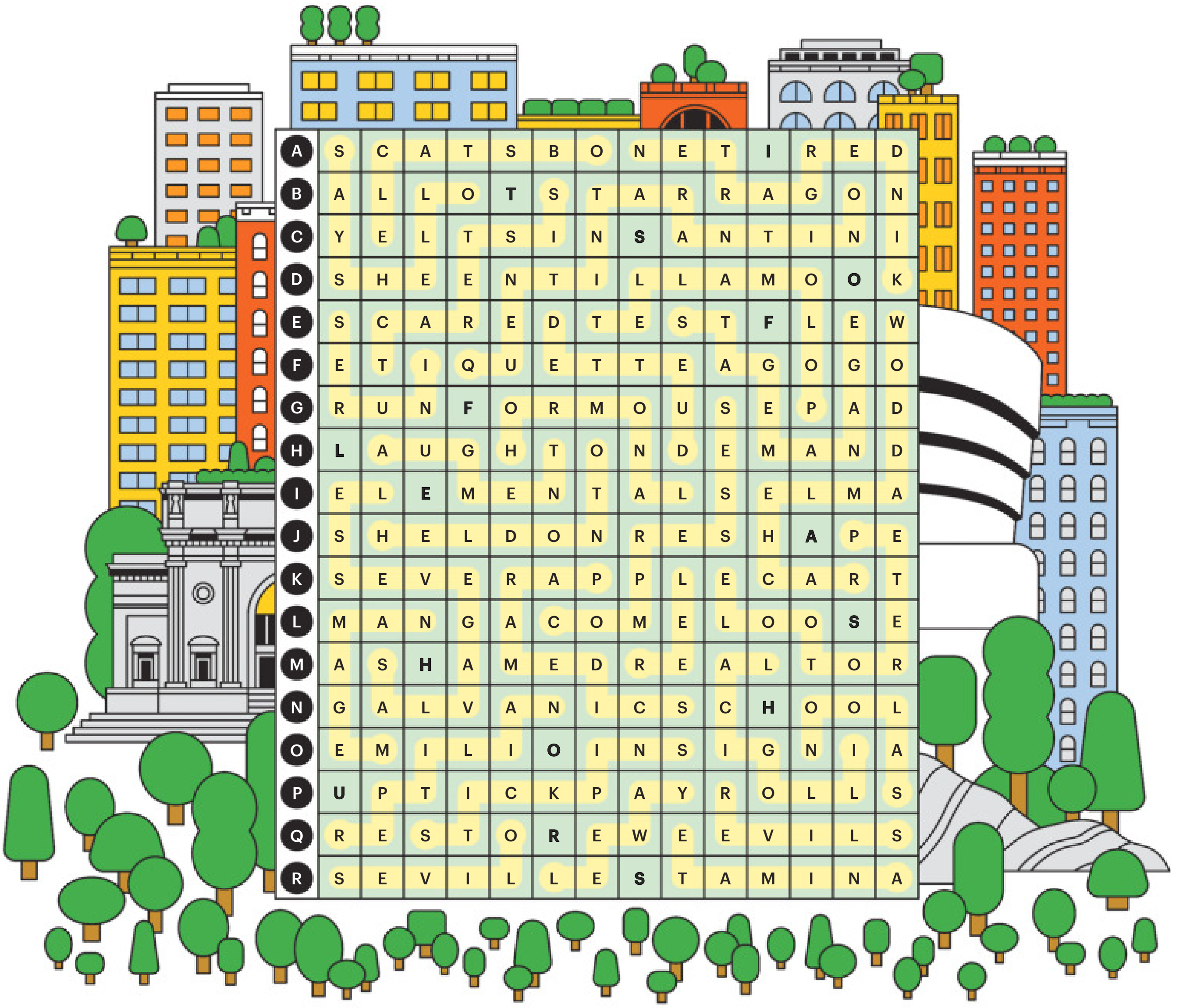
TRIPLE PLAY

page 44

H	I	T	■	O	W	L	■	■	T	E	R	M
A	S	H	■	L	O	B	S	■	O	R	E	O
M	O	E	■	S	O	J	O	U	R	N	E	R
S	T	O	W	E	D	■	S	N	A	I	L	S
T	O	R	E	N	T	■	■	T	H	E	S	E
E	P	E	E	■	R	A	M	I	S	■	■	■
R	E	M	■	L	I	B	E	L	■	A	I	M
■	■	■	C	O	M	E	T	■	A	N	T	I
I	T	S	O	N	■	■	A	D	I	D	A	S
D	O	T	T	E	D	■	P	E	D	A	L	S
T	W	O	T	R	U	T	H	S	■	L	I	T
A	E	R	O	■	B	O	O	K	■	I	C	E
G	L	E	N	■	■	O	R	S	■	E	S	P

LOST IN CENTRAL PARK

page 30



A	S	C	A	T	S	B	O	N	E	T	**I**	R	E	D
B	A	L	L	O	**T**	S	T	A	R	R	A	G	O	N
C	Y	E	L	T	S	I	N	**S**	A	N	T	I	N	I
D	S	H	E	E	N	T	I	L	L	A	M	O	**O**	K
E	S	C	A	R	E	D	T	E	S	T	**F**	L	E	W
F	E	T	I	Q	U	E	T	T	E	A	G	O	G	O
G	R	U	N	**F**	O	R	M	O	U	S	E	P	A	D
H	**L**	A	U	G	H	T	O	N	D	E	M	A	N	D
I	E	L	**E**	M	E	N	T	A	L	S	E	L	M	A
J	S	H	E	L	D	O	N	R	E	S	H	**A**	P	E
K	S	E	V	E	R	A	P	P	L	E	C	A	R	T
L	M	A	N	G	A	C	O	M	E	L	O	O	**S**	E
M	A	S	**H**	A	M	E	D	R	E	A	L	T	O	R
N	G	A	L	V	A	N	I	C	S	C	**H**	O	O	L
O	E	M	I	L	I	**O**	I	N	S	I	G	N	I	A
P	**U**	P	T	I	C	K	P	A	Y	R	O	L	L	S
Q	R	E	S	T	O	**R**	E	W	E	E	V	I	L	S
R	S	E	V	I	L	L	E	**S**	T	A	M	I	N	A

Cartoon caption: "It's off-leash hours."

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